Chronicles

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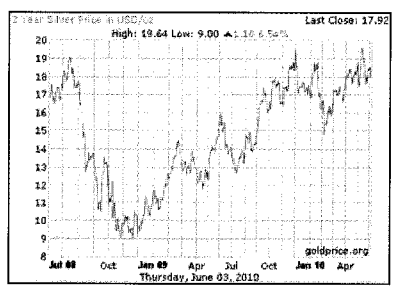

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Fantastic Allegations

I am the author of the books *They Were White and They Were Slaves* and *Judaism Discovered*. After accurately stating those facts in the June 2010 *Chronicles*, Scott P. Richert proceeded to pen a farrago of pseudobiography ("You Say Ásátru, I Say Shoresh," *Rockford Files*), stating that this writer received a $40,000 contract from "School District 205" and that I have an "Old Icelandic" program that I allegedly call "Ásátru, Inc." He then admits that he made up the preceding and goes on to claim, seriously this time, that *Judaism Discovered* is "equivalent" to the Nation of Islam's book *The Synagogue of Satan* by Ashashed Muhammad.

Why am I being abused in this fashion, and why is my name being dragged through the mud by means of a fantasy concocted by Mr. Richert and published by *Chronicles*? No less fantastic is his allegation that my work is equivalent to the Islamic volume. Islam, like Orthodox Judaism, is a false religion, as I have made clear. Has Mr. Richert even read *Judaism Discovered*? My text is thoroughly Christian. One of its theses is that hatred of Judaic people is destructive and fulfills a Talmudic dictum.

Mr. Richert's reckless and irresponsible column could stir much confusion. His one-line disclaimer may not offset his more numerous paragraphs of falsification. *Chronicles* ought to know better than to spread a false report from a malicious witness (Exodus 23:1).

—*Michael Hoffman*
Coeur d'Alene, ID

Mr. Richert Replies:

Mr. Hoffman need not worry that my column "could stir much confusion." *Chronicles*' readers are quite capable of reading the entire text of a single-page column, noting my one-paragraph (not one-line) disclaimer set off with a subhead, and understanding exactly what I did and did not mean.

Nor, for that matter, should Mr. Hoffman worry that his own devoted followers might misunderstand my column, should they stumble across it while taking a much-needed break from Mr. Hoffman's incessant conspiracy theories and his charitable discussion of Pope Benedict's Regensburg Address, in which the "thoroughly Christian" Mr. Hoffman defended at great length the false religion of Islam, its murderous "prophet," and its "sacred" text, while referring to the Holy Father as "your ass-holiness," "the crypto-rabbi in the Vatican," and "a gravedigger who swings his mud-encrusted shovel over the barren wombs and seared brains of the Germans."

Mr. Hoffman proved a decade ago that his devoted followers are perfectly capable of understanding what they read. After we at *Chronicles* chose not to accept an advertisement for *They Were White and They Were Slaves*, Mr. Hoffman viciously attacked *Chronicles* in one of his publications. One might even call his remarks "a false report from a malicious witness." Unlike my column, they were not accompanied by a disclaimer.

Mr. Hoffman's readers understood the point of his attack quite well. They attached bricks to pre-paid business-reply envelopes and included death threats aimed at our former vice president of operations. They made similar threats over the phone and posted Mr. Hoffman's remarks on bulletin boards on the internet, encouraging others to do the same. One of them even went so far as to find our VP's home address and the name of his wife, and sent a death threat to her attention at their house.

As long as Mr. Hoffman's devoted followers give my column the same attention that they gave to his words, there is no danger of them making the mistake Mr. Hoffman fears that they will make.

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How To Succeed in Banking Without Really Trying

by William J. Quirk

THE BUSH-OBAMA financial-rescue plan is premised on saving the big banks that caused the trouble. The theory is that we need to help Wall Street to help Main Street. Government would make money available, and the banks would make loans to business, which would revive the economy. "Once you assume," Michael Lewis, author of *The Big Short*, told Charlie Rose, "that the creditors, shareholders and management must be made whole, you have no alternative to gifting the banks." The "gifting" program for banks has succeeded beyond the dreams of avarice. In the first quarter, Goldman Sachs earned at least $25 million on each of 63 working days. They made more than $100 million on 35 of them. JPMorgan Chase and Bank of America also made money every single day in the first quarter. The *New York Times* called it the equivalent of a perfect game in baseball.

The Federal Reserve, the Treasury, and the FDIC set up 25 programs to bail out the banks, committing $23.6 trillion to the task. The biggest gift is probably the ZIRP (Zero Interest Rate Policy) program, first announced in December 2008. Tom Hoenig, president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, reported on the April meeting of the Federal Open Market Committee (the board that sets short-term interest rates): "conditions will likely warrant keeping the fed funds rate, which is our key monetary policy tool at exceptionally low levels for 'an extended period.'" ZIRP, to our bankers, is a license to steal. They borrow from the Fed at zero percent and loan the money back to the Treasury at 3.5 percent. The bankers call this the "carry trade." You or I might call it "fish in a barrel." The perfect-game analogy doesn't fit the "carry trade"; rather, it calls to mind the 1919 Chicago White Sox. The Fed has lent out some two trillion dollars to our largest financial institution at zero or near-zero interest rates to carry on the "carry trade." Chairman Bernanke has refused to say who received that money.

The Federal Reserve reports that, as of May 2010, the big U.S. banks have increased purchases of U.S. Treasuries by 35 percent since September 2008; cash assets (which includes cash on hand or in the process of collection as well as balances due from other banks) are up 147 percent. Commercial and industrial loans, however, including small-business loans, are down 26 percent. The Bush-Obama theory, the numbers make clear, is a failure. It failed because it was based on a misunderstanding of how our big banks are making their money these days. They no longer make loans; they are making markets in derivatives and in general running Wild West casinos. Goldman Sachs CEO Lloyd Blankfein told Charlie Rose on April 30 that derivatives served a social purpose. For example, he said, suppose you want to drill an oil well in the Gulf that will cost $100 million and will only be profitable if you can sell the oil for at least $80 a barrel. You could buy a derivative from Goldman that would guarantee you the $80 price for the next 30 years. Then, says Blankfein, you can drill your well. That may be a social purpose, but is that what bankers are supposed to be doing? How are you going to put that on an exchange?

The banks don't disclose how much of their profit comes from the "carry trade." What is known, as reported by *Fortune*, is that recent profits at big banks are largely attributable to "trading." Business is so good that Bank of America's chief executive, Brian T. Moynihan, declared the "worst of the credit cycle" to be "clearly behind us" and that recent economic growth is "real." Moynihan is correct—growth is real, if you belong to the big bank club. Nearly 80 percent of industry profits came from the country's largest banks, with the six largest raking in the lion's share. Meanwhile, on Main Street, smaller banks continue to struggle. There have been 72 bank failures this year, and the number of "problem banks" reported by the FDIC reached 775.

The banks, despite all the gifting, are probably still bust. If they were "marked to market," the "toxic" securities they are carrying on their balance sheets at fictitious values would have to be written down. At some point, ZIRP will end, and banks will have to start paying market rates to secure funds.

What does ZIRP do to the economy? Chronically low interest encourages borrowing and consuming over saving. It punishes savers. We are told all our lives to save money for retirement. Say a retiree has put aside $1 million expecting to earn four- or five-percent interest, giving him $40,000 or $50,000 to live on. ZIRP drives the rate down under one percent and the return under $10,000. Savers subsidize borrowers. The Fed's theory is that if savers can't get any return on their money they will spend it on flat-screen TVs.

"Inevitably," says Hoenig, "the policy bias is to delay, to let accommodative conditions stand, and to reverse only when the economy is beyond recovery and into an expansion." Thus, "While we may not know where the bubble will emerge, these conditions, left unchanged, will invite a credit boom and inevitably, a bust."

William J. Quirk is the author of Courts & Congress. *Janek Kazmierski and Andrew D'Antoni, law students, gave invaluable assistance in the preparation of this article.*

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Worse Than Obama?

THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION declared the mid-June announcement that BP was establishing an escrow fund worth $20 billion to pay compensation claims to Gulf Coast residents and businesses to be a resounding victory for the White House, but what it actually showed was Obama's hands-off, indifferent management style, in which nothing is ever clearly or properly delegated. Whether responding to an unexpected private failure or crafting major legislation, Obama leaves the relevant actors to their own devices, offering little or no guidance as to how they should proceed. Only when things seem to have reached a critical point does he feel obliged to involve himself directly. The problem is not that Obama delegates—most successful leaders do—but that he often delegates to the point of abdicating any role at all. Having contributed remarkably little to the outcome, Obama then takes credit for whatever final product others produce. This may be clever politics, but one does not have to be a devotee of our presidential cult to see that it is not good leadership.

Unfortunately, Obama is blessed with an opposition that has completely unrealistic expectations of what presidents should do, which makes his underwhelming leadership seem far more defensible. Many of Obama's opponents are reflexively hostile to everything remotely associated with him, and this frequently forces them to adopt absurd, politically ruinous positions as they attempt to show that Obama is always wrong regardless of what he has done. Many Republicans in Congress and the mass media typically wanted to be more pro-corporate than BP itself and decried the escrow fund as a "shakedown," which gave Obama far too much credit for achieving the result. This also put them in the ridiculous position of aligning themselves with the multinational responsible for massive ecological and private-property damage in states that represent an important part of their political coalition.

Another typical overreaction came from former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney, who penned a June 10 op-ed for *USA Today* in which he claimed that responding to the oil spill was the "quintessential responsibility" of Obama's presidency, one that he must not delegate to anyone else. On its own, delegating responsibility is hardly a sign of bad leadership, but Romney must believe it is, if he is serious in what he wrote. Had Obama heeded this advice, refused to rely on BP at all, and attempted to insert himself into the situation as the technocratic emperor Romney imagines the President should be, he would have been guilty of the far greater and potentially more destructive error of trying to micromanage the efforts to contain the oil spill.

Behind Romney's criticism is a worrisome overconfidence in the efficacy of technocratic management and a disturbing craving for executive activism that come from his experience as a corporate "turnaround artist." Obama's leadership does not inspire confidence, but the technocratic arrogance and executive overreach under a President Romney would be terrifying. Unfortunately, given the alternative Republicans are currently offering, we may have to endure many more years of Obama's poor leadership.

—Daniel Larison

A Defining Moment

IN ITSELF, THE ISRAELI MILITARY'S raid on the "Free Gaza" aid flotilla was proof, as the astute thinker Forrest Gump put it, that "Stupid is as stupid does." The flotilla was sponsored by a mishmash of Western lefty peaceniks and Turkish-backed Islamist groups that were trying, to use historian Daniel Boorstin's term, to produce a "pseudo-event"—an activity that exists for the sole purpose of gaining media coverage.

To put it in national-security terms, the flotilla did not pose any clear and present danger to Israeli security interests or to the lives of Israeli civilians. It was more of a p.r. nuisance; even under the worst-case scenario, it would have created nothing more than an embarrassing media circus for the Israelis.

Trying to disrupt this mostly inconsequential "humanitarian" operation by launching a risky military operation did not make a lot of sense. In fact, it helped transform a pseudo-event into a military disaster that left nine Turkish civilians dead and created a major diplomatic crisis for Israel at a time when her relationship with Turkey has been deteriorating, when ties with the Obama administration have been under pressure, and when Israel has yet to recover from the devastating international condemnation of her earlier offensive in Gaza.

Indeed, on all these and other diplomatic fronts the Israelis have suffered major losses and achieved nothing. If anything, their deadly commando operation seemed to have played directly into the hands of the radical Islamists of Hamas who control the Gaza Strip and their many international allies in the Muslim world, as well as the Western intelligentsia, whose members include ardent feminists and homosexual-rights activists who do not seem to see the irony in providing support for radical Muslims who seek to hide women under veils and stone homosexuals to death.

From that perspective the Israeli decision to storm the Turkish ship was, to rephrase Talleyrand, worse than a crime; it was a blunder.

The pseudo-event that has taken the form of an international incident may yet prove to be one of those "defining moments" in history. In the aftermath, Turkey announced that she was halting military cooperation with Israel and not sending back the ambassador she had already withdrawn from Tel Aviv, demonstrating that

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the strategic partnership between Turkey and Israel is coming to an end. Moreover, the rupture in the relationship between these two Middle Eastern governments was taking place at a time when Ankara seemed to be trying to distance itself on the diplomatic front from Washington by placing obstacles in the way of American efforts to isolate Iran and force her to end her military nuclear program.

Some commentators have suggested that under the leadership of the Islamist Justice and Development Party (AKP) Turkey has been setting aside the secular and pro-Western orientation of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of modern Turkey, and is transforming into a radical Islamist state. Indeed, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his aides have been pursuing a strategy known as Neo-Ottomanism, based on establishing closer ties with the Arab world and reasserting Turkey's leadership in the Middle East.

According to this narrative, which seems to be an intellectual derivative of the "Clash of Civilizations," Turkey is seeking to use her growing diplomatic and economic power to serve as the geostrategic core of a more integrated Muslim *ummah* that will be able to challenge the United States and the West. In that context, leading an effort to promote the Palestinian cause and delegitimize the Jewish state could be seen as part of a consistent strategy to mobilize Arab and Muslim support.

But one could draw a more realpolitik narrative to explain recent Turkish policies. The Turks have concluded that French and German opposition is making it less likely that they will be able to join the European Union anytime soon, and they have recognized that the mess the Americans have made in Iraq and the erosion of Egyptian leadership of the Arab world have helped create a strategic vacuum in the Middle East, which they are now trying to fill.

So the Turks may be hedging their bets by strengthening ties with Syria and other Arab countries, as well as with Iran, lessening their ties with Israel, and projecting a certain level of diplomatic independence *vis-à-vis* the United States and the European Union—while at the same time maintaining their traditional Western orientation, including their membership in NATO. In a way, is it not conceivable that a secular nationalist Turkish leader *à la* Atatürk would have followed a similar strategy?

Whether Erdogan and his political allies are neo-Ottomans hoping to recreate the caliphate or just a bunch of Turkish Gaullists, the crisis over the aid flotilla has helped to dramatize the growing diplomatic isolation of the Jewish state in the Middle East and worldwide at a time when the United States, Israel's leading global patron, seems to be losing her global influence. This is all happening close to 100 years after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the onset of the British Empire's influence in the Middle East, including its effort to establish a Jewish political entity in Palestine (in the Balfour Declaration). Facing another example of the return to history, some Israelis are probably recalling that, before approaching the European governments, Theodore Herzl, the founder of the Zionist movement, had lobbied the Turkish sultan to grant some sort of autonomy to the Jews in Palestine.

—Leon Hadar

Die, Belgium, Die!

MOST ENGLISH SCHOOLBOYS learn this quip: Belgium is a country invented by the British to annoy the French.

Which is just about true. And if you don't understand why and how Belgium was invented, you won't understand the significance of the elections in Belgium earlier this summer.

In 1795 the revolutionary French occupied what were then the Austrian Netherlands. After Napoleon's defeat and the expulsion of the French, the allied powers re-established the ancient union between the Austrian Netherlands and the Dutch Republic. This created the United Kingdom of the Netherlands, whose Protestant king was to act as a brake against any further adventures by France.

But in 1830 French-speaking intellectuals and Catholic leaders in Brussels led a revolution against the Protestant Dutch king. In fact, the revolution had been fomented by the French. The allied powers were afraid the revolution would set up an independent republic aligned with France. This would give the French access to the strategic port of Antwerp, which was, in Napoleon's words, "a pistol pointed at the heart of England." So instead the allies, led by the British, imposed a kingdom named Belgium and installed a German prince as "king of the Belgians."

Now, what's wrong with this picture? What's wrong is that none of it mentions the Flemish. This "Belgium" was made up of the French-speaking Wallonia, which is the province stretched across the northern border of France, but also Flanders, the Dutch-speaking territory to the north, whose cultural and historical ties are with the Netherlands.

In the southern part of Flanders is the third part of this invention called Belgium: Brussels, a Netherlandish city that at the time of the creation of Belgium was genuinely bilingual. The 19th-century monarchy did its best to extinguish the Dutch language and, indeed, to extinguish all of the Flemish culture in the city. The Flemings were a majority of the population of Belgium, but they were to see their language nearly wiped from the capital city and their desire to establish their own government in their own ancient territory denied by this thing called "Belgium."

You may now be able to understand the cry that went up in the chamber of the federal parliament on the last day of the last session. As the politicians were packing up to get on with the June election, one Flemish member of parliament stood and

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roared out, "Belgium must die!"

Much to the shock of many across Europe, the voters were listening. Following the election, a Flemish separatist party came top of the poll. The New Flemish Alliance, led by Bart De Wever, jumped from 5 seats to 27, making it the largest party in the 150-seat federal parliament. De Wever will be the key player in forming the next coalition government, which, this being Belgium and the parties in the federal parliament being French and Flemish-speaking versions of socialists, conservatives, liberals, greens, and separatists, could take months to form.

De Wever says he wants Flemish independence. He says he wants Belgium to "evaporate." Yet his party is not the most muscular of the three Flemish separatist parties. The Vlaams Belang—"Flemish interest"—party is. I joined some of them when they were campaigning in Antwerp a week before the election. Since they were giving their election spiel in Dutch, I could only catch their speaking style and the word "Muslim." Independence is not all these Flemish want. They want a control on immigration, too.

Bart De Wever is less direct than Vlaams Belang. Instead of talking about true independence, he now talks about Flanders becoming a "region of Europe." As another Bart might say, "Uh-oh." That's like saying you want to achieve your freedom from house arrest by signing on next door for bonded servitude. De Wever's supporters say he is just wrapping himself in the European Union flag in order not to frighten the "moderate" voters. Maybe.

Who will become the next prime minister? At this writing, it looks like De Wever might stand to one side and let Elio Di Rupo, a French-speaking socialist—oh, all right, a French-speaking homosexual socialist who dyes his hair and wears bow ties—become prime minister. The reason? Di Rupo's Socialist party came second with 26 seats. De Wever reckons a deal with Di Rupo may give Flanders a faster deal on greater autonomy.

Moreover, the Belgian term in the rotating presidency of the E.U. Council of Ministers runs from July 1 to December 31. The Belgians are supposed to supply a prime minister to be president of the council, and various other cabinet ministers to chair meetings. Having no government at all may be a continuing embarrassment.

To those of us who await the disintegration of the European Union—which is nothing but the Belgianization of Europe—watching Belgium die is a continuing inspiration.

—Mary Ellen Synon

Newsweeklies in Hell

Every Easter and Christmas at least one of America's three newsweeklies—*Time*, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News & World Report*—includes articles trashing Christian dogmas. For Easter 2010, *Newsweek* featured a piece by religion editor Lisa Miller blurbing her new book, *Heaven: Our Enduring Fascination With the Afterlife*.

Concerning the resurrection of men, she wrote, "It's a supernatural event. It's a special act of grace or of kindness on God's part." After she tried to explain it as a kind of materialist abracadabra, a rabbi told her, "The belief in resurrection is more radical. It's a supernatural event." To which Miller responded with pop-cult clichés: "For my part, I don't buy it. I do, however, leave the door open a crack for radical acts of grace and kindness—and for humbling ourselves before all that we don't understand."

That's an echo of the 1980's dorm poster, "Practice random kindness and senseless acts of beauty." I have always wondered: How can kindness and beauty be random and senseless?

At the height of their popularity and influence in the 1960's and 70's, the newsweeklies tried to jam seven days' worth of events into a convenient format for Mr. & Mrs. Joe America. The magazines provided news, Hollywood gossip, and a little analysis folks might have missed because they didn't have the time to read the daily newspaper. *Time*, the most popular, was the centerpiece of Henry Luce's publishing empire, offering guidance to the middle class of his "American Century" in prose as processed as Velveeta cheese.

Newsweek in the 1950's boasted commie-busting conservative Ralph de Toledano, later a fixture at *National Review*. Bought by the Washington Post Company in 1961, the magazine reportedly was being set up by CEO Phil Graham as a perch for President Kennedy after he left the White House. When Kennedy was killed, the magazine merged into the general Washington news smog. In May 2010 it was offered for sale, meaning it soon would be dead, without hope of resurrection.

The best of them once was *U.S. News & World Report*, edited by fabled journalist David Lawrence from the time he founded it in 1933 until his death in 1973. My father had a subscription, so I grew up reading it and absorbed its amiable conservatism and open patriotism. Owned by its employees, it carried on the Lawrence legacy until inevitable factionalism led to its sale in 1984. The new owner was Mortimer Zuckerman, the Canadian real-estate magnate and one-time paramour of Gloria Steinem.

Zuckerman, unbound by Lawrence's common-sense moorings, made the magazine a platform for his brand of leftist neoconservatism. He hired neocon scion John Podhoretz, currently the inheriting editor of the Podhoretz family's *Commentary* franchise, to type dull cultural pieces. Sometime around then, my father let his subscription lapse. So did other subscribers.

In January 2009, *U.S. News* went biweekly. In June 2009, it went monthly. As with the other news mags, it maintains an internet presence. But on the net, no matter what you are, you're equal to millions

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of bloggers wired on Starbucks poking on their iPhones at two in the morning. It's just not the same as raising doubts about the Virgin Birth in Mrs. America's soul as she spots the cover of your anti-Christmas issue on her way through the Safeway checkout. And nowadays those printed issues look so anorexic.

It does seem strange that, in their final days, as their ad space drops toward zero, the newsweeklies would attack the beliefs of the religion still held by most of their subscribers. Perhaps they suffer from Doc Holliday Syndrome. Doc, after being diagnosed with tuberculosis, went on a killing spree, taking as many others with him as he could on his horse ride to Hell.

On what to report, the newsweeklies have always followed the lead of the two main liberal newspapers, the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*. In spring 2010, the *Times* began a *jihad* against Pope Benedict XVI, which the news mags have joined.

In the Easter issue of *Newsweek*, the Rt. Rev. Ms. Miller, D.D., S.T.D., unburdened herself in an article entitled, "The Bad Shepherd: Why Pope Benedict XVI may not be able to heal his church." Miller's writing was replete with misunderstandings of the Pope and the Vatican.

But her densest moment came when she discussed a 2001 document by the Pope when he was the head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith—which she insultingly called by its previous name, the Holy Office. She wrote, "The document put sexual offenses by clergy—specifically sex with 'a minor below the age of 18 years'—on a par with the sacrilege of tossing communion wafers in the trash."

But in Catholic belief, they're not "communion wafers" after consecration, but the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. In other words, the document placed molesting children on par with mistreating the actual, physical God. Even secular reporters, back in the days of literacy, could understand that.

Rivaling Miller's screed was the cover story in the June 7 issue of *Time*, "Why Being Pope Means Never Having To Say You're Sorry: The sex abuse scandal and the limits of atonement," by Jeff Israely and Howard Chua-Eoan. The first part of the long, silly title was adapted from the catchphrase, "Love means never having to say you're sorry," of the 1970 novel and movie *Love Story*. About which John Lennon—no doubt having Yoko in mind—quipped, "Love means having to say you're sorry every 15 minutes."

Certainly, the scandal of the abuse of children—80 to 90 percent of them, according to the John Jay College of Criminal Justice, postpubescent boys molested by homosexual priests—is serious. The issue was aired out in 2002 after a series of stories on the scandal were run in the *Boston Globe*, which is owned by the *New York Times*. But where were the *Times*, the *Globe*, and the other papers and newsweeklies when the *Wanderer*, a conservative Catholic newspaper, began reporting on these scandals in the early 1980's? The *Globe* got a Pulitzer Prize for its series. Why didn't the *Wanderer* get several Pulitzers?

In these attacks on the pope, I always look for the inevitable phrase that runs like the one used in the *Time* article: "For some [Church] liberals, the crisis over sex abuse is a chance to argue old questions of dogma and discipline once again: for example, to address the necessity of celibacy in the priesthood and the church's vision of sex, to expand the role of women and to define the status of Catholic homosexuals."

That's what the article is really about, and what all of them are about. *Time*, *Newsweek*, and the *New York Times* are using the bishops' failures to uphold Catholic sexual ethics to insist that the ethics be changed.

Just a month earlier, in its May 3 number, a *Time* cover story celebrated "The 50th Anniversary of The Pill. So small. So powerful. And so misunderstood." To make sure Mr. & Mrs. America got the message, in his *To Our Readers* column, Managing Editor Richard Stengel called it "the miracle tablet." The battle lines are clear: the Eucharist *versus* "the miracle tablet."

In all these articles, no mention is made of how the Pill has decimated populations, contributing to the demographic, economic, and political decline of the West. It's not a "miracle tablet" but a social suicide pill.

It's also telling that *Time* is part of the vast Time Warner, Inc. conglomerate. Time Warner Cable spews hard-core pornography into the homes of millions of Americans. Early in the morning on March 16, 2010, its hard-core porn preempted the Kids on Demand channel in homes in North Carolina. A company spokesman blamed "a technical malfunction."

You can bet your foreclosed farm that *Time* won't soon be doing a cover on "Being Time Warner Means Never Having To Say You're Sorry: The porn-for-kids scandal and the limits of technical malfunctions."

—*John C. Seiler, Jr.*

Obiter Dicta

Our cover and some inside illustrations are provided this month by **Stephen Warde Anderson**, a self-taught artist from Rockford, Illinois. Mr. Anderson has been exhibiting nationally for over 20 years, and galleries currently representing him include Packer-Schopf Gallery in Chicago and Tory Folliard Gallery in Milwaukee. His work can be seen on his website, *stephenwardeanderson.com*, and he blogs at *itsimplyisntdoneoldchap.com*.

Our poet this month is **Larry Johnson**, a native of Mississippi. He is the author of *Veins: Poems 1966-2006* (David Robert Books). He lives in Raleigh, North Carolina, and teaches at Wake Technical Community College. He has published in *Iowa Review* and *New Orleans Review*.

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Looking Backwards

"Whose picture is this, Daddy?" The little blond girl is 11 years old, and, as she flips through the iScraps, her smooth round face shows the first twinge of the questioning mind that will disturb the complacency on which all future happiness depends.

"That's my grandfather."

"Your grandfather? He doesn't look a bit like us," she said, staring at the image. "He's black-haired with a pinched face, and squinting as if the light hurt his eyes. And he doesn't look a thing like your grandfather."

"You're thinking of my father's father, whom you used to play antique video games with at the Happy Valley. This is my mother's father. He died long before you were born. I can barely remember him, but people who knew him say he was a strange bird. He was a writer of some kind, but he seemed to spend most his time reading dead languages. It's funny to think, but his language is now as dead as the ancient ones he cared so much about."

"What language did your grandfather speak?"

"It was called English, just like what we speak, but it has so changed that most people have to take a course in Old Modern English—sometimes they call it Christian English—just to read those old writers. It was full of difficult rules that no one wanted to learn—what they used to call grammar and usage. I studied it in school and tried to read one of my grandfather's books. I think he must have been crazy. He was on the wrong side of everything, and every cause he ever took up was eliminated by the Great Progression. He would have approved of your curiosity, though, which is a good reason not to ask questions about the past, especially about your ancestors. And, by the way, when you go back to your schoolhome, I wouldn't mention this conversation, much less use a word like *ancestors*. It might get us all in trouble."

"What's wrong with thinking about the past or wondering who my great-grandparents were?"

"Everything, darling. In the first place, it doesn't really matter who they were or who anyone is. After a couple of generations, we are so dead that no one can even recognize our picture. Your children will not have heard of my grandfather and probably not even your grandmother. But even if we could remember our ancestors, it is very unhealthy to think about these things. It leads to trouble."

"What sort of trouble?"

"Well, imagine if you found out your great-grandfather was a racist or one of those selfish sexists who refused to share his wife with other men and women—and I believe both these charges were made against my grandfather—you'd be embarrassed, wouldn't you, sweetie?"

Her moon face, forming a smile, nodded up and down obediently.

"Or imagine he had done something really great, like sacrificing his life for an endangered species or saving famine victims in Haiti or Somalia, then you might be tempted to go around bragging about it, and the other children at school would feel bad—they used to call this *envy*—because they didn't have a hero in their family. If you once start thinking about your family, you might want to learn something about old history, when people were proud of their nations or even their skin color, when they talked about *traditions*."

"What's traditions?"

"Well, this is another word you should forget. In my job as social-controller, I have to study some of these old things, because there are some ugly parts of the world—and believe me, you wouldn't want to go there—where people still want to talk about the bad old times. They are like the Japanese Christians I once learned about."

"What are Christians?"

"Oh, they were silly people who thought it was important how many forms the Great Spirit had appeared in. We know the Spirit is one but in everything that lives, but in those days some people said it was many, others said one, but these poor people thought it was just three: not two, not four, but three. Incredible, isn't it? Anyway, some Christians had gone to Japan, but when a wise ruler outlawed their religion—don't ask, it's not important—some of them secretly kept it up, handing down certain handshakes and mumbo-jumbo for hundreds of years. When the first Americans—*America*'s the old word for the biosector we live in—visited Japan, one of these Japanese Christians brought out some string of beads and said that all he knew was that their god had a mother.

"That is sort of what these tradition-keepers believe, and it is my job to show how foolish they are and make it possible for them to progress. We could just let them pass

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over in the Happy Valley, of course—capital punishment is illegal—or put them in schoolcamps in the desert, but it is easier to give them free computers. Some of them still think they can record their ancient books and share what they know. What they don't know is that we not only monitor everything and everyone, but we can change it all up to confuse them. That is the great Principle of Wiki—and 'Blessed are the Wikid for they shall rewrite the universe.' You must have been taught that text at your schoolhome?

"Back in my grandfather's day, people were always killing each other over who they were, or thought they were. Different colors, different spirits, even different ways of lubing each other, though in those days they said 'loving,' which is a much less precise word. Even then, these people had no power. There were still hundreds of different bio-sectors, each with its own government, but nearly all of them were controlled by wise men who knew the only way to eliminate war and hate was to eliminate differences.

"I think you must have learned some of this at your schoolhome. How Marx abolished differences in wealth, and Freud eliminated sexual differences, and Dewey, perhaps the best of all, eliminated all those petty distinctions that arise from remembering who your people are or were—look, I am even falling in with the way they used to speak! In principle the revolution was complete long before 2000, but there were still large numbers of holdouts, called Muslims and Christians, Frogs and Krauts, and other people devoted to their own sectors, and here in the West-Atlantic Sector there was even a group of people calling themselves rebels. Why nobody put them in jail is beyond my understanding. Perhaps they were too insignificant to bother with.

"Instead of moving forward with the great revolutionary project of uniting the entire mammalian ecosphere, some of these people actually started looking for their roots. Some were content to pay a genealogist to trace their ancestry back to some English king or African prince. (You'll end up like them, if you don't watch out!) These worshipers of imaginary ancestors were pretty harmless, but there were reactionaries who were far worse. They wanted to study what they *called* history, but what was really self-glorifying lies about ancient people slaughtering each other over how many gods could dance on the head of a microchip. (Don't ask me what a microchip is; it's just some tiny thing they thought was important in those days.)

"Others wanted to go back to the selfish old times when one man paired off with one woman—and only a woman—for life. Think how boring it would be, dear, if children could only have one mother."

"But I have only one mother, and I heard you tell Mom that you loved her and her alone."

"That's just the way we are. Perhaps it's a failure on our part."

"And besides, every one of my cousins knows who her real mother is."

"You shouldn't say 'real mother.' They are all their real mothers. You understand. If your mother and I decided to take other partners, you'd be just as happy, wouldn't you?"

The girl nodded mechanically without smiling.

"Anyway, this is where my grandfather comes into the story. He wanted to restore all the bad old things. What he called love of country, we know was xenophobia; what he called Christian marriage was selfishness and hatred of gay people; his opposition to abortion was really just hatred of women; his talk about chivalry and honor was part of his bigotry, and when he defended ancient languages and traditions, he was just revealing his small-minded rejection of diversity."

"MY GRANDFATHER was not really even a leader of these reactionary bigots. When he died, his pictures were not shown onscreen anywhere; he didn't even get talked about in what were called newspapers. (Don't worry; the last newspaper disappeared when I was in my teens.) He rationalized his failure to achieve celebrity by claiming that individual men and women were not really important in and of themselves—and he was certainly right on that one—but, instead of understanding that as social mammals we are like social insects, for whom all that matters is the tribe or colony, he imagined that human beings were links in a continuous chain, and not just in a genetic chain (which is pretty obvious) but in a chain of tradition that makes it important to know what our ancestors believed and maybe even to trust their judgment, at least their collective judgment, more than you trust our own. Now this is foolishness itself, because my personal judgment and your personal judgment have been formed by the Wiki, and whatever discrepancies that might occur will be corrected in the future by the mechanism known as informational servocontrol, which makes us bold to say, 'the individual is all, and the all is the individual.'

"Well, my grandfather was too blind or too willful to understand the great principles that were already progressing the world even in his own day. He thought it was important to read Vergil's *Aeneid*. Yes, I know you've read it in iMind, but that is a series of talking images that circulate through your nervous system. He meant reading the entire book with his eyes and lips, and that book was, I can tell you, long: It was made up of 12 sections, called books, each

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with hundreds of lines of jingles. Your grandfather was silly enough to read it in a dead and useless language called Latin—he could even quote some of the Latin by heart—but even in English he insisted on a translation made in an impossibly antique form of Old Modern English, by someone named Dryden.

"My mother, who retained some sympathy for the poor old guy and may have secretly agreed with him—I hope you won't tell her I said this—she used to say that her father would say things like, 'He who is ignorant of what took place before his birth must remain forever a child,' and when asked specifically why Homer and Vergil were so important, he would quote an even older geezer named Gee-Kay, who said that those who count in any generation will always be talking of Troy. I have no idea of what this is supposed to mean. I can count—especially when I am iMinded—but I am never talking of Troy, except today, of course. What they meant by Troy was a war fought ever so long ago in which brave men killed each other, all over the love of the most beautiful woman in the world."

The blue eyes in the round face opened wider.

"Apparently, the old guy thought it was important for people to know who they are, and to know who they are, they have to know who they have been—that is, who their people were—and to know some of the things their people knew. He knew this could no longer be done in school or eventually even in public. So he put little groups together, cell by cell, to teach people to teach themselves and their children. They had a monthly newspaper and, for a while, they had access to the Wiki-World-Web, until the Progression in its course put the Web into proper order to serve the world.

"Eventually, they had to do everything in print, which was safer, because no one important really cares about print anymore. Families and communities collected books and worshiped their Triunity—usually in Latin or another useless language called Greek—because dead languages are unknown and therefore secure. They set up little schools—first openly and then in secret—to teach their children to read Dante and Shakespeare, Cicero and Saint-Paul. I know these names don't mean anything to you, and they shouldn't. His whole conspiracy was hopelessly regressive and ineffective, not really Wikid at all, and when the Progression was complete, all these writers and readers and thinkers—names for things that no longer exist—simply faded away. They were flushed out of the iMind, and no one reads books, except for the few hopeless cranks I have to track down to be Deweyized in a schoolcamp. You see how silly the whole thing is, don't you?"

"Yes, silly," the little girl agreed, but as she walked away, her father noted that the twinge—was it doubt or curiosity?—which had appeared only once or twice in the past, was now hardening into something like the frown line or eye crinkles people get when they are repeatedly sad or happy. Perhaps it was time to take the girl to see her grandmother.

"*Dum spiro, spero*," he muttered to no one in particular. ♦

Translated from Neo-English.

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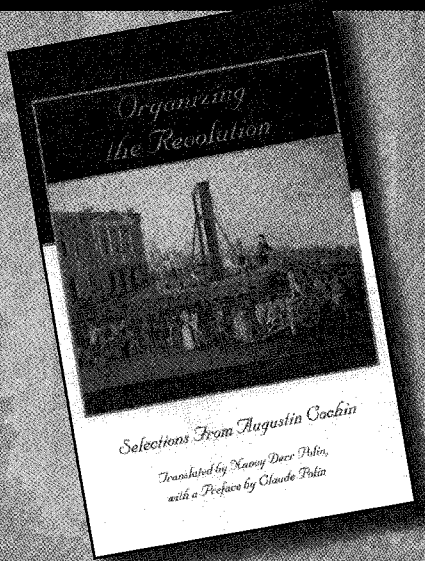
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The Great Cane Duel

by Larry Johnson

Erik Satie vs. Willy: 1904,
Sunday afternoon, greenshaded Parisian street,
Bowlers aslant. His cape flung away in heat,
Willy charged, feinted, forgetting gentleman's lore
That required weapons touch, delicately almost, before
Combat. Hissing and pirouetting, he beat
Vainly Satie's cane, held horizontally, more
Like a staff to bar smug dissonance. What caused this feat
Of velvet-suit flummery twixt artist and critic? Fact
Says Satie sidestepped, struck Willy's derby off, cracked
The stick's handle—but the writer stooped to retrieve
His hat, and was soundly swatted right where we'd believe.
O not even Colette's svelte loving words while she cranked
Peach ice cream for him soothed Willy—he'd been spanked!

For Donald Justice

by Larry Johnson

Poems are made from words, not ideas.
—Mallarmé

Which narcotic do we hear in Debussy's
Violin sonata (morphine of the brain
Or poppy?), sweeping those fevered harmonies
Along with its mordant freight, killing the pain?
Such concord inoculates us with healing
Sparks of vibration, fluid as those bred
In poems, where similar tendriled, vital feeling
Comes only from words, as Mallarmé once said.
Chromatic language, then, is how the writer
Makes drowsy ferns or palm-encrusted moons
Become euphoric, fused, frictional nitre
Florescing, like meteor trails on pitch lagoons,
To a cauterizing music with no name:
The match's strict concision into flame.

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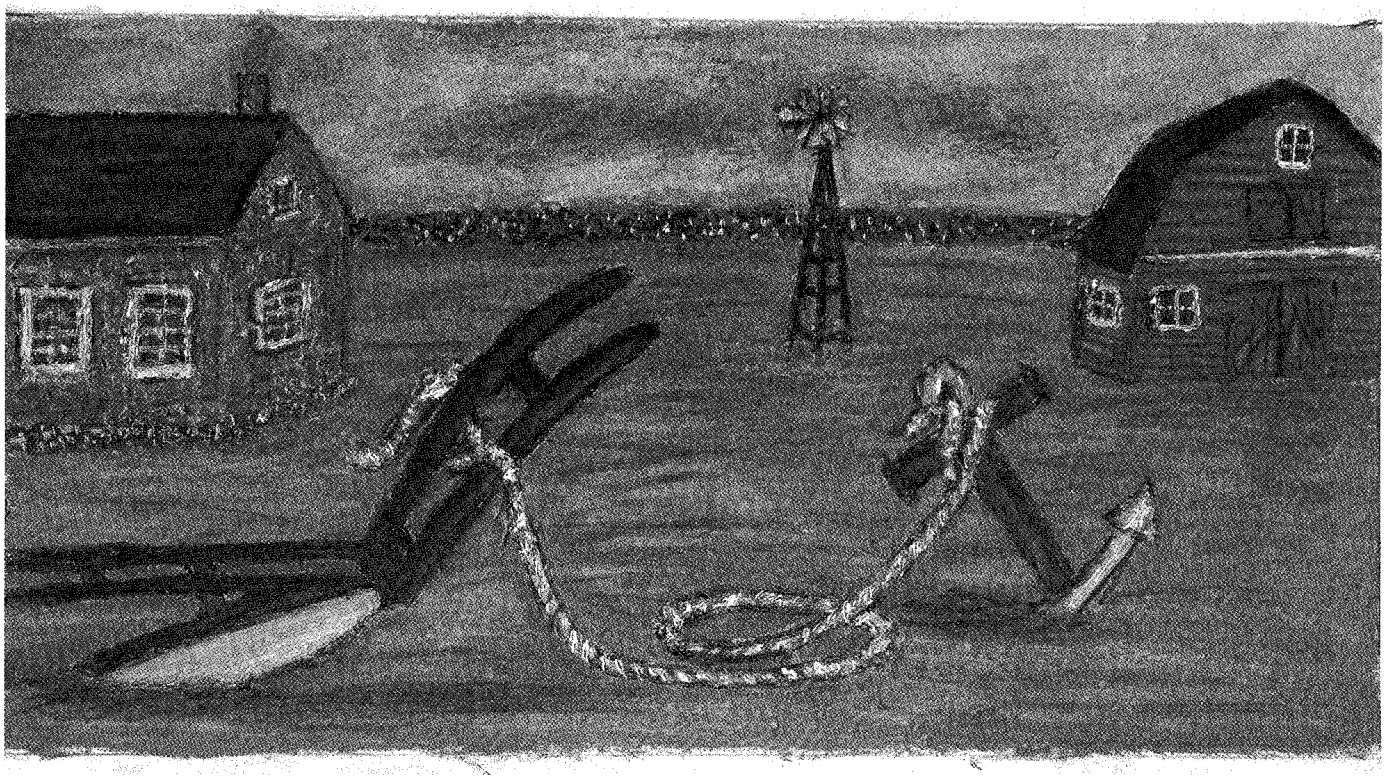

Stephen Warde Anderson

Authentic Communities

by Claude Polin

Deep in the heart of man there is a need imprinted by nature that may very well be his basic difference from all other animals: Being a thinking one—*i.e.*, an animal capable of self-awareness—man needs to be something meaningful in his own eyes, something which deserves to exist, possessed of a certain dignity. All men need to give some objective value to their lives.

Each must derive this value either from being an absolute end to himself—which amounts to playing God—or from drawing his personal, and possibly unique, substance not from himself but from playing a meaningful role in some kind of order of which he is only a part, but without which he would remain what a grain of sand is to a desert. Man is an animal longing to belong and to participate.

To satisfy this longing presupposes that man sees the world into which he must fit as something worth existing by itself. His quest for being induces the need for a reason for all things to exist as they are. He cannot help being a religious animal, because he ultimately aspires to having his place in the world—the place, Christians think, God Himself allotted him.

Now, for all men, the world is two-sided: It is a physical entity (each man is part of the natural world), and it is a social entity (no man is an island, unless he is a brute or a god). To achieve his own nature, man must manage to discover what may be his place in both sides.

The most natural way for a man to feel part of nature is to be in contact with some soil, to be rooted in a plot of land. To escape being as a speck of dust, deposited where he is by the winds of life, whose insignificance is precisely what allows him to fit anywhere, he must find a place that is somehow his natural place, that somehow needs him. It is no happenstance that the aristocrats, men who were supposed to be the finest of men, used to bear the name of their land (*e.g.*, Monsieur de Rochambeau). The reason is not that ownership of land was the main means of domination, as Marx would have it, but that it is natural for man to anchor his two feet to ground that is his own. (No one anchoring them on the concrete floor of his high-rise apart-

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ment is likely to believe the place was made for him.) Since the farmer must till his field for it to produce wheat, the field on which the spring wheat sprouts is to him what the painted canvas is to the painter: his personal enduring mark on earth. It even seems nature herself wants it to be his own particular place, for nothing natural is ever uniform, no parcel of land is ever strictly identical to the next.

To be rooted in a particular soil is not to be chained to a narrow horizon, as moderns would have it. On the contrary: How can the farmer, having sown his field with handfuls of seed, waiting for nature to reward him with bushels of wheat, not feel the world to be a cosmos in whose encompassing harmony he has a part to play, not believe God Himself wants him to live where his wheat grows?

Of all the elements in God's universe, the soil is the one friendliest to man. The myth of Antaeus, the giant who grew stronger every time he was knocked down, is not merely a myth, nor is the Jews' belief in a promised land uniquely theirs. The seas and the skies also appear as God's work: They can be admired or loved, but in these elements no man has a particular place, neither to be born, nor to live, nor in which to play a role as natural as the farmer tilling his soil. Nor has any man a natural place in a town, which is only the meeting place of men who have chosen the rootless, nomadic, artificial life of all traders.

It is just as natural for each man to anchor himself in a history as in a landscape, to have his place in the flow of time as well as in space.

What is it to be a Christian if not to consider essential to man a desire for an eternal place in an eternal world? But this desire translates as a concern for one's past and one's future; it is natural to man to remember and be remembered, to need to be an heir and leave a legacy, to turn oneself into a somehow indispensable link between a past and a future, and not to remain a fly that does not outlive the summer. But one's history is no history to anyone but oneself, and no man has a past or a future by himself. Which is why, since no one is as important to any other as to a member of his particular family, if a man has any allotted spot or any lasting existence in the eternal change of all things mortal, it is first of all as a descendant of his ancestors; in his living relatives' thoughts, hopes, or memories; and as the prospective ancestor of future generations.

Though families may be self-centered, they are also the medium through which an individual is given a place in the history of his community. No one can personally relate to past events of his community except through the entity, his family, which experienced and survived them, and of which he is a part. Which is why a lasting nation is by nature an association of families: Individuals die; families endure. There are no national traditions where there are no family traditions, and having family roots is no narrowing of the individual's vision. One could even claim that, since the past of his nation is, in turn, linked to the past of other nations, it is only by being a part of a particular history that men may ultimately relate to the history of mankind.

Finally, if man is a participating animal, there can be no propensity more natural in him than to be acknowledged as performing a useful function among his fellow men. Who can retain his self-esteem whom no one needs? But not every activity answers a natural need: a doctor's or a baker's does, but not a bookmaker's. Now, what may be deemed a useful profession, a true calling? There is a simple criterion: An activity may be deemed truly significant when it is ennobling in the actor's own eyes, when he regards it not merely as pleasant or financially rewarding, nor as a necessary inconvenience, but as an honor or even a duty to practice it (which is why for centuries professions tended to be hereditary)—in other words, when it does not only benefit him but also the entire community. Inasmuch again as man longs for participation it is natural that he be intent on having a true profession, on being to the community what an organ is to the body, neither dependent on his fellow citizens nor feeding upon them in a parasitic way. A natural community thus comprises a limited number of citizens, for, beyond a certain size of community, the role of each becomes so miniscule as to be unnoticeable.

This is not to extol a closed society, a narrow and selfish parochialism, as many would have it today. The very habit of being useful first to one's fellow citizens naturally breeds the notion that for a man to exist means to be of service to his fellow men at large. There is no contradiction between a properly understood parochialism and a real sense of the brotherhood of man. The basic rule of natural solidarity is to be sure not to have missed any opportunity to help one's immediate neighbors before assisting unknown and remote foreigners; the more this becomes the general rule of behavior, the fewer the chances the various communities will be in desperate need of assistance from others.

To sum up, there can be no man fully happy with himself who does not belong to a soil, a past, and a calling. And these three natural propensities, when fully acknowledged, make for all authentic communities, for three things make a community: an attachment to a soil, a reverence for tradition, and a spirit of service. Such communities may confederate themselves, but not beyond the point at which the whole gets too big and the individual too small. This means there

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is no general society of mankind. The only thing that may be universal among men is the propensity to participate in the life of the world, which is the essence of religious faith, but this translates into participating in worlds small enough for their participation to remain meaningful.

MODERNITY'S BASIC ASSUMPTION is that man's freedom supersedes his nature, that his nature is to make his own nature. This amounts practically to giving free rein to individual whims, passions, imagination, impulses, or vagaries, and radically precludes the idea that there may be natural bounds to his freedom—and therefore any idea that there might be any such thing as a natural society, other than that unnatural entity called the general society of mankind. All the main dogmas of our times appear geared to the subjective satisfaction of individuals, taken as essentially rootless and cosmopolitan beings: modern science, whose goal is not the contemplation but the domination of nature for the benefit of the unnatural, as well as natural, needs of any possible man; political economy, whether liberal or socialist, which caters to a nondescript individual's unlimited consumption (and to the maximum enrichment of the strongest individuals or classes of individuals); democracy, whose ideal remains the improbable sovereignty of an absolutely free and therefore unspecified individual; religion, which becomes more and more sectarian, appealing to any individual's tastes and supposedly spiritual fancies; culture, whose more and more appalling relativism or mere nihilism exonerates the individual from all possible norms, and particularly any natural one; the prevailing importance of commercial activities, whose basic law is to sell anything one may wish to anyone. The modern mentality seems to have sided with the unavailing glorification of a conception of man's nature that used to be considered the corruption of his true nature, which is to belong. Theologically speaking, our societies are intrinsically sinful, because they revel in the implicit assumption that the only god who deserves a man's devotion is his ego.

Inasmuch as there is such a thing as a nature of things and man, our societies are therefore doomed to self-destruction.

When a man is born a spiritual foundling and dies, for all purposes, a bachelor, when everything is equally worth doing, when anyone can live anywhere, then nothing and nobody is really worth anything, and indefinitely yielding to his passions ends up depriving man of any lasting satisfaction, if it does not drive him to the spurious drug-induced delights of oblivion. At some point the unwitting denial of a human nature becomes literally suicidal for mankind. This is glaringly obvious with homosexuality and abortion, but it is just as lethal with the spreading of urban agglomerations, for men are like apples: When stacked, they rot.

But the truth of the matter is that sin has been, is, and will remain tempting. Compared with the ease of bowing to one's whims, to behave according to nature will always remain painful, if only because it involves the frugality that goes with local production and consumption.

What are the chances of returning to the womb of Mother Nature, and specifically to natural, modest, communal living? We are these days beset by the aforementioned modern abhorrence for seeing oneself as a being who must belong, the unexpressed loss of vital energy or meaningful goals of our societies, and the onslaught of more youthful cultures eager to overpower our old Christian one. Under these circumstances, one must wonder whether Western civilization has not run its course. This is no reason not to resist to the end, but no ground either for realistic optimism.

As for the immediate future, it is not that a sort of diffuse nostalgia for the old folkways cannot be found. But the feeling is usually perceived as more quaint than profound: To love folklore is fine, as long as one only indulges in it on weekends. The environmentalist dreams of a nonpolluting car, but he still wants a car. He wants to save the planet, but is it because he respects a natural order of things, or because he is afraid natural resources are limited? He wants to play the farmer, but does he realize the farmer has to obey the laws of nature more than any other man—or does he think that country living is hippie living, that living according to nature means God is dead and anything is permissible? Are the environmentalist leaders really after a return to the past of the Western world, its traditions and traditional beliefs, or after the disparaging of the West and its eventual demise?

The issue we are facing is exclusively moral and spiritual. If there could be a spiritual conversion (in the etymological meaning of the word), the rest would follow. But is this conversion in man's hands? As far as I am concerned, on a human scale, there is no way to go except through a very modest, very narrow door: to keep voicing the laws of God's nature, and to make up for the absence of full-fledged real communities by entering some more artificial ones united around the same creed, the same principles, such as what could be called "the *Chronicles* community." Such purely spiritual or intellectual communities are of course desperately in need of a concrete substructure. But for the moment they represent our civilization's last chance.

Corresponding editor Claude Polin is a professor emeritus at the University of Paris-Sorbonne.

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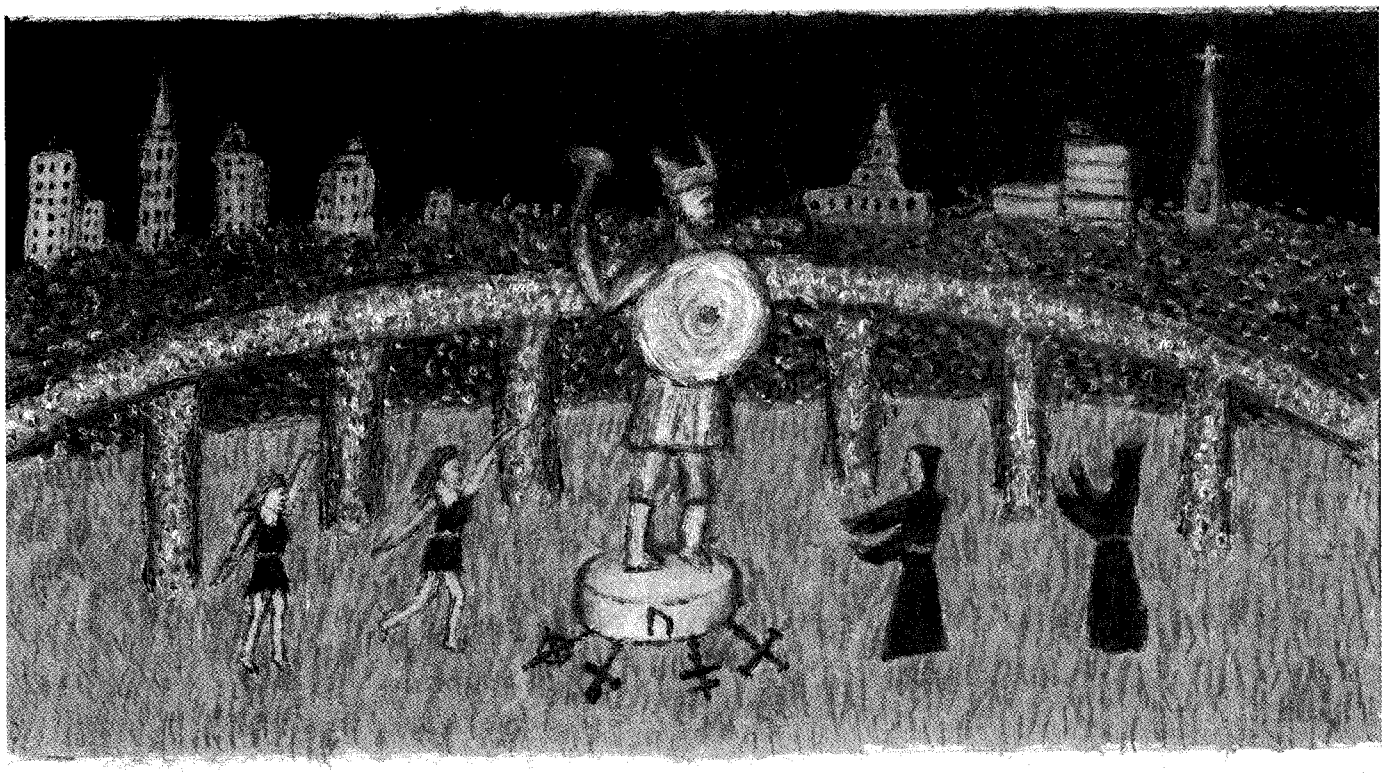

Stephen Warde Anderson

Where the Demons Dwell: The Antichrist Right

by Jerry D. Salyer

THOSE BLISSFULLY IGNORANT of right-wing soap opera will have never noticed the Antichrist Right, a loose coalition of writers who regard the Church as the worst thing that ever happened to Western civilization. If I understand correctly, the Antichrist Right would describe Christianity much as Christianity defines evil: a shadowy, parasitic negation that possesses no substance of its own and prevents its mesmerized victims from attaining their true destiny.

One proposed remedy for the Christian plague is a revival of paganism.

I honestly don't know how seriously to take the Antichrist Right's neopagan aspect, but I do know that in opposing it Christians should take care not to belittle actual pagans, whether ancient Stoic or modern Shinto. As C.S. Lewis observes, "If you are a Christian you do not have to believe that all the other religions are simply wrong all through . . . you are free to think all these religions, even the queerest ones, contain at least some hint of the truth."

More authoritatively, St. Justin Martyr referred to nobler pagans as having received "seeds of the Logos," while Saint Ambrose employed Homeric imagery to illuminate the human condition. And as Josef Pieper writes in his *Guide to St. Thomas Aquinas*,

> Plato undoubtedly understood the sacred tradition of the myths [of Homer and Hesiod] as lore descended from a divine source, and he believed this lore ("You think it a story, I think it truth"). From which it follows that the effort undertaken in the Platonic dialogues to extract the true meaning from the symbolic language of the myths is theology in the strict sense of the word.
>
> Now the truly exciting thing is that St. Thomas, too, would term this Platonic interpretation of the myths theology in the strict sense. For he, along with most theologians of the Christian West, was ready to allow that revelation, the veritable speech of God, had been vouchsafed to men outside Holy Scripture.

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> *Multis gentilium facta fuit revelatio*; "revelation has been made to many pagans"—this was an opinion that Thomas pronounced many times. In line with this he saw no difficulty in assuming that the Sibyls, say, had spoken under an *inspiratio divina*.

Though *Theogony* is not Scripture any more than Plato is a Church Father, per Pieper we are nonetheless obliged to recognize that pagan poets and philosophers convey clues about deeper realities *via* "'God's speech' sounding and resounding throughout the mythical traditions of many nations."

Fear of catching cooties *via* communion with Nigerians and Chinamen leads the neopagan toward relativists, subjectivists, emotivists, postmodernists, and other metaphysical anarchists who regard truth, essences, and objective value in much the same way as vampires regard sunlight.

Those who complain of America's descent into paganism are being unfair—to *pagans*, that is. After all, polytheistic cultures typically recognized that vocation is not an entitlement: A Vestal Virgin who felt she had an inalienable right to get married was simply out of luck, as was any male who resented the aforementioned office's sex restrictions. Pagan culture often surpassed modern-day America by Americans' own standards. Our "egalitarian" society treats political elites' lives as infinitely more dear than those of military recruits drawn from flyover country and the 'hood. At least Agamemnon was no chickenhawk.

More importantly, though, Agamemnon acknowledged a coherent communal order handed down unbrokenly from one generation to another. He differs greatly from the neopagan, whose alleged ancestral reverence is decidedly selective. Why should the unknowable names and faces of distant Germanic ancestors count for more than a great-grandfather who frowned fiercely upon heathenry? Because the latter is not exotic or cool enough? Neopaganism advises us to serve Kith and Kin and Tradition at the expense of identifiable kith, kin, and local traditions, much as liberalism advises us to serve grandiose global causes at the expense of our God-given duty to our neighbor. I am not suggesting one should parrot the convictions of parents or grandparents at the expense of truth; rather, I highlight the absurdity of invoking filial piety in scorning many generations' worth of Christendom. As a "tradition," neopaganism has hardly been passed down unbrokenly, and is at best analogous to gnosticism—or better still, to the impiously engineered dinosaur clones of Jurassic Park. It is paganesque, not pagan.

Ásátru practitioner Stephen McNallen contrasts "indigenous religions," which "are innately tied to a specific people and cannot be transferred to another group without losing their truth, power, and integrity," with religions like Christianity, "which claim the allegiance of all the human race." Exposing the Church's dirty little secret that "'catholic' means 'universal,'" McNallen mercilessly rubs our noses in the fact that a full-fledged Christian can be "Chinese or Nigerian or anything under the sun."

All true. And?

At times I worry that anti-universalist hysteria has attained the same grip with the "paleo" and "post-paleo" right as antiracist hysteria has attained with the left. Race is significant; so is the fact that we live in a universe. In condemning "the attack upon universals," Richard Weaver rightly observed that "the issue ultimately involved is whether there is a source of truth higher than, and independent of man." Fear of catching cooties *via* communion with Nigerians and Chinamen leads the neopagan toward relativists, subjectivists, emotivists, postmodernists, and other metaphysical anarchists who regard truth, essences, and objective value in much the same way as vampires regard sunlight.

For the Universal position on race, consult Pius XI's *Mit brennender Sorge*:

> Whoever exalts race, or the people, or the State, or a particular form of State, or the depositories of power, or any other fundamental value of the human community—however necessary and honorable be their function in worldly things—whoever raises these notions above their standard value and divinizes them to an idolatrous level, distorts and perverts an order of the world planned and created by God; he is far from the true faith in God and from the concept of life which that faith upholds.

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Minimize neither the "necessary and honorable" nor the warning against idolatry. The real divide is between those who believe we live in an ordered κόσμος subject to a transcendent authority, and those who do not. The former recognize that folk religion cannot replace God religion for the same reason one cannot replace a window with a mirror. If we cherish our individual selves, kin, and homeland, then we are bound to honor their Maker that much more, as loyal Anglo-Saxon thanes honored generous gift-giving lords.

Yes, ethnic identity is important, but not because there is no universal human nature; on the contrary, ethnicity is important precisely because there is a universal human nature, and part of that nature is to have ethnicity. True, I could never experience *The Odyssey* in quite the same way as someone born and reared on the isle of Ithaca. Nevertheless, it insults Homer to suggest his epic offers little to humanity in general, which is what is implied by the doctrine that race is the highest level of communion. Furthermore, in denying universals and worshiping creature instead of Creator, the Cult of Germanic Humanity differs from the Cult of Generic Humanity only in exclusivity of kind: The neopagan is closer to the liberation theologian than either would like to admit.

Not all Antichrist Rightists are practicing neopagans, but the sentiment is usually about the same. In "The Hero As Victim," Dr. Steve Burton laments that "heroes of suffering"—such as those singled out for favoritism under affirmative action—have replaced bygone "heroes of achievement." He then slyly brings up his theory of leftist victimology:

> Would it be mischievous for me to suggest that this interesting phenomenon represents the ultimate triumph of the Christian aspect of our Western cultural inheritance over both the Greco-Roman and the Germanic aspects? So far as I can determine, neither the Greeks, nor the Romans, nor the Germanic tribes ever regarded the victims of history with anything but contempt. They were champions of achievement—especially military achievement. If any of them ever lost any sleep over the sufferings of the losers, I have yet to hear about it. But the deification of the victim—God on the Cross—lies at the very heart of Christianity.
>
> *Vicisti, Galilaee.*

Count on the West's "defenders" to concede the left's central slander: European civilization boils down to ruthless (albeit colorful and creative) SOBs carelessly trampling on the weak and the poor. In truth, no Westerner worthy of the name would consider shrugging off the Trail of Tears, pogroms, or lynchings; what he objects to is the bad-faithed, oversimplified, one-dimensional exploitation of such events by those with no authentic desire to make peace. In other cases, he rejects leftist martyrology because he doesn't believe that those in question are victims—*e.g.*, traditional "gender" roles are not inherently victimizing.

If leftists dismiss achievement, why do they fervently insist that women have contributed to art, science, and culture every bit as much as men, and that Muslim Spain was a cosmopolitan utopia?

Of course, one may find it hard to believe—especially the miraculous parts—but, as a story, the Passion is about a perfect Man unjustly condemned: "but this man has done no wrong." Hence, it's far closer to Socrates—"one should avoid doing wrong with more care than being wronged"—than to conniving sophists, ancient or modern. It is also about a Man sacrificing His life to save others, thereby having more in common with a soldier throwing himself on an enemy grenade to save friends—or a mother dying in childbirth, or a black-lunged father descending into a coal mine to support his family—than with the Gramscian cuckoo Burton reinforces. Was Aristotle too cryptic when he explained that "people are sometimes actually praised, whenever they endure something shameful or painful as the price of great and fine results"? Identifying Christian self-sacrifice with leftist victimology demands total disregard of teleology on the part of cultural Marxist and Antichrist Rightist alike. There are many purposes—some good, some bad—which might inspire patient endurance of outrageous fortune's slings and arrows (to cite one suffering-sympathetic mediocrity). It is the understatement of the century to say that man's reconciliation with his Creator and the eradication of Western Man are not the same purpose.

And do modern Westerners really need more appetite for "achievement," anyhow? If so, why are so many parents experimenting on their kids with electronic learning "toys"?

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Why so many deified, steroid-saturated athletes? If leftists dismiss achievement, why do they fervently insist that women have contributed to art, science, and culture every bit as much as men, and that Muslim Spain was a cosmopolitan utopia? Some cynical wags even mischievously suggest that what "heroes of achievement" have accomplished with such inventions as radio, TV, and the internet has been the transformation of Americans' brains into something not unlike tapioca pudding. Meanwhile, unpatriotic conservatives still claim our glorious military achievements in Iraq and Afghanistan aren't so triumphantly shiny as we thought.

Perhaps Austrian Jew Erwin Chargaff was a hero of achievement. A Habsburg subject in boyhood, Chargaff later mastered a dozen languages so as to read Pascal, Dante, and Meister Eckhart in the original, chaired Columbia University's Department of Biochemistry, won the National Medal of Science, and discovered the base-pairing principle used by Watson and Crick to analyze DNA. Alas, our magnificent achievements at Hiroshima and Nagasaki prompted this last of the natural philosophers to lose sleep over the sufferings of the losers, and he mused uneasily,

> My life has been marked by two immense and fateful scientific discoveries: the splitting of the atom, the recognition of the chemistry of heredity and its subsequent manipulation. It is the mistreatment of a nucleus that, in both instances, lies at the basis: the nucleus of the atom, and the nucleus of the cell. In both instances do I have the feeling that science has transgressed a barrier that should have remained inviolate.

Even as he championed a "science with a human face" that would be "disengage[d] from technology and the pursuit of power," Chargaff worried about the weak-mindedly ambitious, who like the poor are always with us: "Today the cure of genetic diseases, tomorrow the experimental improvement of the human character. *Erimus sicut dei*, as someone promised to my ancestress. The poor fool bought death instead." In a letter to *Science* he warned that the Baconian project had turned into "a destructive colonial warfare against nature," predicting grimly, "The future will curse us for it."

Chargaff leads us back to those allegedly Nietzschean Greeks: "there is a measure to everything which must not be exceeded. Nobody knew this better than the Greeks with their famous μηδὲν ἄγαν—of nothing too much . . . Man is only strong when he is conscious of his own weakness."

How does Social Darwinism explain Odysseus pitifully weeping like a war-victimized widow keening over her husband's corpse? Why does Sophocles' Neoptolemus show such compassion for the stinking abandoned cripple Philoktetes; why is *Antigone* named for a self-sacrificing girl who gets buried alive; why does the long-suffering, excruciatingly shamed Oedipus turn out to be a holy man? (Need we bring up hemlock-chugging Socrates again?) As to the Greeks' inheritors, why does Vergil treat Dido sympathetically and describe "losers" founding Rome, and why does Plutarch commend a failed republican politician whose head and hands got nailed to a lectern?

I know even less of Germanic tribes than of Greeks and Romans, so all I may say of them is that, if they never "regarded the victims of history with anything other than contempt," then so much the worse for Germanic tribesmen. It will be a cold day in Hell before I blush before some "champion of achievement" for having lost sleep over the "losers" depicted in *The Gulag Archipelago*. The author of that left-wing-pinko victimological tract knew there is no conflict between love for homeland and Christianity, for "nations are the wealth of mankind, its generalized personalities; the least among them has its own unique coloration and harbors within itself a unique facet of God's design." Yet he likewise contended that "the meaning of earthly existence lies not, as we have grown used to thinking, in prospering, but . . . in the development of the soul." As for Bolshevik followers of Thrasymachus—"The result is what counts! It is important to forge a fighting Party! And to seize power! And to hold on to power! And to remove all enemies! And to conquer in pig iron and steel! And to launch rockets!"—he perceived, "They are turning into swine, they are departing downward from humanity."

This brings up, finally, the bottom of the barrel of the Antichrist Right, the lobotomized cybertrolls who fantasize about bioengineered *Übermenschen*, post images of women dancing in front of Stonehenge as if auditioning for a Spinal Tap video, eagerly anticipate the coming of The Mighty Thor™, and excel at nothing except for willfully stupid malevolence. "This scum, which exists in every society, rises to the surface in any transitional time," wrote Solzhenitsyn's countryman Dostoyevsky in *Demons*. "And yet this scum, without knowing it, almost always falls under the command of that small group of the 'vanguard' which acts with a definite goal, and which directs all this rabble wherever it pleases, provided it does not consist of perfect idiots itself—which, incidentally, also happens."

Indeed, it does.

Jerry D. Salyer writes from Louisville, Kentucky.

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California Ecclesiazusae

by John C. Seiler, Jr.

During the June primary campaign for governor of California, a GOP operative told me that the plan of the party elites is to nominate Mitt Romney for president in 2012, with Meg Whitman as his running mate. That way, she would spend hundreds of millions of dollars of her fortune on the campaign, enriching every GOP consultant on earth, including the elephants in the zoos.

That explains the parade of moderate Republican *pezzonovanti* who traipsed through the state backing her: Mitt the Fit himself, Jeb "Not Another" Bush, Newt "Three Wives" Gingrich, George "Sgt." Shultz, Pete "Record Tax Increaser" Wilson, and John "Insane" McCain.

Meg—everybody in California politics is called by his first name—is worth $1.4 billion from her decade as CEO of eBay. She just blew 70 million simoleons on grabbing the Republican nomination, or $88 per vote. Her major opponent, state insurance commissioner Steve Poizner, also is worth tens of millions of dollars from his own high-tech firm, but millions don't beat billions.

In this election, the vaunted right-wing Tea Partiers were almost irrelevant. The state is just too big and fruity and nutty to be affected by anyone who hasn't been featured on *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous*. Meg is a pro-abortion moderate, who has been dubbed "Arnold in a skirt." That's a reference to our existing misgovernor, Arnold Schwarzenegger, a centimillionaire who back in 2003 was elected on a platform of "moderation" and business acumen from his movie career and real-estate investments.

Before this election Meg was a political cipher, voting almost not at all for 35 years. Yet she still effectively zinged Steve for helping water down Proposition 13, the 1978 property-tax-limitation measure that in California has replaced "Thou shalt not commit adultery" in the Decalogue.

Steve taunted back that Meg had contributed $3,000 to reelect Democratic Sen. Barbara Boxer, whose politics are to the left of Kim Jong Il. But Steve never used against Meg the biggest skeleton in her gilded closet. She is one of the world's biggest smut merchants, giving a new meaning to GOP: Grand Old Pornographer. The establishment media didn't cover this, either. Only some of the alternative media did. Don't worry. This is a family magazine, so I won't quote any of the sleaze whose sale contributed to Meg's dirty fortune.

The *San Francisco Weekly* reported:

> Prior to the company's 1998 IPO, Whitman oversaw the creation of an eBay section, Adult Only, dedicated exclusively to the sale of pornography, rather than simply including porn items in auctions for more mainstream movies, magazines, or toys. The move was couched as a way to sanitize the overall site.

And you thought eBay only sold grandma's antiques and old Monkees LPs.

The facts became public during depositions given beginning in 2006 in an age-discrimination lawsuit against eBay. Meg herself, in a sworn declaration in 2008, wrote, "Certain proposals concerning eBay's mature audiences policies were presented to me."

In his deposition, former eBay Vice President of Customer Support Scott Newman said, "There was a lot of concern whether we should continue having a mature audiences site or not." Meg "had often gone on the record saying, 'I wish we hadn't started that thing.' But it was kind of like, now it's out of the bag, and to stop it would have caused kind of a big deal, I guess, with the sellers who made their living on the 'mature' site."

So she is not only a billionaire pornographic priestess (to use John Lennon's phrase from "I Am the Walrus"). She is also indecisive. Yet the day after her victory, her website boasted: "Meg Whitman is all about taking action—it's how she built her successful 30-year career in business."

Actually, she is the perfect Republican candidate: rich, unprincipled, indecisive, perverse.

In November, Meg faces a reincarnated Jerry Brown, the current attorney general, now 72 in earth years. This is his fifth run for statewide office, including two victorious campaigns for governor in the 70's, when he was dubbed "Governor Moonbeam" for his lunar orbital flights of political and verbal fancy. And since 1948, only three elections for statewide constitutional office have seen a ballot without a member of the Brown family on it, the others being his sister, Kathleen Brown, and their father, Pat Brown.

Jerry remains as politically agile as ever, taking both sides of an issue in a single sentence. And he has a vast knowledge of the state and its politics, going back to his childhood in his father's governor's mansion. He will also

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have the backing of the state's powerful government unions, keen to make sure that no effective pension reforms are enacted so the state more quickly takes a header into insolvency. So even Meg's moolah will not assure victory.

Also winning on June 8 was another rich Republican damsel, Carly Fiorina, former CEO of Hewlett-Packard and worth at least $40 million. She bested Tom Campbell, a University of Chicago-trained economist, former congressman, and former budget director to Arnold. Tom is now a three-time loser in races for the U.S. Senate.

Any controversy over Barbara Boxer's abortion remarks were drowned out by a media geyser over Carly's open-mic slip (and blasphemy, which no one mentioned) about Barbara: "God, what was that hair? Soooo yesterday."

Although dubbed a moderate, Tom is pro-abortion, pro-same-sex "marriage," and not averse to tax hikes. Yet I'll always celebrate the fact that he led the fight in Congress against Bill Clinton's 1999 bombing of Serbia, which murdered 5,000 Christian Serbs and put the Al Qaeda-connected Kosovo Liberation Army in charge of Kosovo.

Also losing in the Senate race was Chuck DeVore, an Orange County state assemblyman who most appealed to the Tea Partiers. Chuck is excellent on taxes and budgets, and he is pro-life. But his main concern is foreign policy, where he is a strong hawk on the unconstitutional Bush-Obama wars. At least he is not a chickenhawk, having served 20 years in the National Guard, recently retiring with the rank of colonel.

Newcomer Carly was supported by pro-life groups (which upset Chuck, who has long been a vocal pro-lifer). She burnished her pro-life credentials the day after the election, defending her stance against charges by Barbara that "She wants to make it a crime, and that would mean women and doctors in jail. That is so out of touch with Californians" (especially out of touch with Californians who are abortionists and donate to Re-Elect Barbara).

Yet Carly's hands also bear some resemblance to Lady MacBeth's. DeVore's campaign distributed evidence that Carly's pro-life credentials were, until the campaign, hazy at best. And a large chunk of Hewlett-Packard stock is owned by the David and Lucille Packard Foundation. Its website explains, "The Population and Reproductive Health Program works to slow population growth in high fertility areas of the world and to enhance and protect women's reproductive health and reproductive rights, especially for marginalized and disadvantaged girls, women, and communities."

On the other hand, Packard Foundation pressure, led by Packard heirs, in 2005 was instrumental in ousting Carly from HP for supposedly mismanaging the company when she arranged its merger with Compaq. During her term as CEO, HP's stock lost 60 percent of its value. Perhaps she will campaign on the pro-life message, "I cut the Packard Foundation's pro-abortion trust fund by 60 percent."

Any controversy over Barbara's abortion remarks were drowned out by a media geyser over Carly's open-mic slip (and blasphemy, which no one mentioned) about Barbara: "God, what was that hair? Soooo yesterday."

Meg and Carly were not the only distaff Republican victors on June 8. Also winning nomination across America were Sharron Angle in Nevada, backed by Tea Partiers to unseat Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, and South Carolina State Rep. Nikki Haley, running for governor in the state that once bequeathed America John C. Calhoun.

Many Democratic women also were nominated. Already, there are 17 female U.S. senators and 75 representatives in the House. It's a 21st-century *Ecclesiazusae*. Too bad Aristophanes is as dead as Calhoun.

Yet electoral eyes will turn most often to California, land of sunshine, dreams, beaches, swimming pools, movie stars, Beverly Hills, deficits, and bankruptcy. Inevitably, the Meg-Carly tandem is being compared to the undynamic female duo that won two U.S. Senate seats for Democrats in 1992, Boxer and Dianne Feinstein.

Back in '92, Barbara and DiFi—the latter's California nickname—were dubbed by the press a political "Thelma and Louise," after the feminist 1991 Ridley Scott movie about two women driving cross-country on the lam. The "Thelma and Louise" comparison is being made again, of Meg and Carly.

Writing in the *Orange County Register* 18 years ago, I was the only one who pointed out that, at the end of the film, Thelma and Louise drive off a cliff. And the worst part was that the suicide-pact gals crashed a classic 1966 teal Thunderbird convertible.

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Dialoguing With Douthat

SURELY, the defining characteristic of the paleoconservative temperament is disgust—with the current state of the country, the culture, and (most of all) the "official" conservative movement. On this last point, there can be no compromise: Eight long years of Bushism, with a foreign policy energized by neoconservative democratism, has bankrupted the country financially and bankrupted the ostensibly conservative movement intellectually. On every issue of importance, the "official" cons have become the right wing of the possible—to borrow and invert Michael Harrington's phrase—capitulating to the left-liberal consensus on every issue of importance, from the Iraq war to "gay marriage." The apotheosis of the party line was and is the oxymoronic "big government conservatism," a phrase coined by *Weekly Standard* senior editor Fred Barnes to describe the "right-wing" adaptation to the spirit of the age—a modification paleocons reject in its entirety.

During the Bush years, we remained outside the official conservative/Republican big tent, which was never big enough to include principled opponents of the Welfare-Warfare State and specifically excluded anti-interventionists. Now, suddenly, with the coming of Obamaism, we are "in"—or, to be more exact, we are no longer being ignored. The liberal media is full of exposés of the alleged extremism and supposed propensity for violence of the conservative "fringe," with neocon ideologue David Frum, who once banished antiwar conservatives from the official movement—calling for a more "open," "inclusive" movement (while still carrying on his *jihad* against anyone to his right).

The reason for this new focus on the "extreme" right is that paleoism is no longer confined to the narrow precincts of this magazine and the few institutions that have promoted the idea that conservatives are the intellectual heirs of the Old Right of Taft, Mencken, Nock, and the America First movement. These ideas have broken through, past the gatekeepers of the mainstream, and generated the rising tide of right-wing populism currently sweeping the country and roiling the GOP establishment. This has provoked a countermovement on both the left and the establishment right, dedicated to smearing the Tea Party movement as beyond the pale, racist-"extremist"-Bircher-antisemitic conspiracy theorists. David Frum and Rachel Maddow, Chris Matthews and Ross Douthat—all tremble at the sight of the Gadsden flag, waving defiantly at these huge Tea Party rallies.

Douthat takes Ron Paul, Rand Paul, Lew Rockwell, and paleos to task for "the extreme rhetoric, the enemies' lists, the obsession with past defeats, the conspiratorial theories of how and why the cause of true conservatism has been betrayed." But this is precisely what the paleo movement is all about—a recognition of the fact that the principles conservatives of the old school and libertarians held in common until, say, the 1990's have been ditched in favor of a pallid "conservative" adaptation of cultural Marxism and Wilsonian interventionism. There is nothing conspiratorial about this narrative: It all happened right out in the open. The fortunes of old America Firsters, which filled the coffers of the old-line conservative foundations, were funneled into the neocon money machine and made to serve ends that would have appalled the original donors. Neoconservatism represents an incursion from the left. This isn't a "theory," conspiratorial or otherwise; it is simply historical fact, as documented by the neocons themselves. They took over the movement and turned it into an unrecognizable mélange of notions, most of them wrong.

"If the Old Right is ever going to be anything more than a sideshow in conservative politics," Douthat intones, "it needs to . . . apply its criticisms of neoconservatives and liberals to its own leaders, writers, and institutions. Physician, heal thyself."

Translation: Junk your ideas, stop reading *Chronicles*, learn to love Norman Podhoretz, and join the fast dwindling *National Review-Weekly Standard* "mainstream."

There is no use trying to reason with, appease, or otherwise "dialogue" with gatekeepers like Douthat, Andrew Sullivan, *et al.* You don't get to write for the *New York Times* as a reward for upholding your conservative principles. Nor does anyone who supported the Iraq war—and egged on the Jacobins who took control of our foreign policy in the wake of September 11—have any political or moral standing to criticize us as "extreme."

If the adherents of the Douthat-Sullivan-Frum version of conservatism held a national convention, they would be lucky to fill the back room of the local Denny's. The Tea Party movement has mobilized many thousands, and they are on the march—in spite of the catcalls and smears coming from both wings of the establishment. The only proper strategy is to march right over Douthat & Co. on our way to victory. ◆

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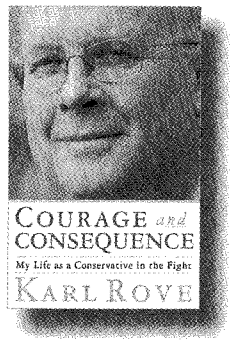

The Creaturely Myth

by James O. Tate

Courage and Consequence: My Life as a Conservative in the Fight
by Karl Rove
New York: Threshold Editions
608 pp., $30.00

There is—there must be–all the difference in the world between an autobiography and a novel written in the first person. Are we clear? Hillary Rodham Clinton's *Living History*, for example, has much in common with Charles Dickens' *David Copperfield* or even *Great Expectations*, with the obvious exceptions that the "truth" seems to be fiction, and the fiction seems to be true. So then, we are not clear. And possibly an autobiography should be read as though it were fiction—at least, Karl Rove's narrative should be read as fiction. And I recommend this approach for one particular reason: The book is much more comfortable to consume as a mythic artifact than as a discursive account of life and politics.

Dickens' *Great Expectations* obviously has an ironic title, and to appreciate the point, we have to read the book alertly and even think about what we remember. Such an approach would not bear fruit with the Rove romance, however. His book has a title that is the opposite of ironic, whatever that might be. *Courage and Consequence* is about neither the one nor the other. The subtitle is even more anti-ironic: What is a "Conservative" and what is "the Fight"? No one would learn anything about those questions that she did not bring with her to the text. I don't think that the readers of this journal need any explanations about courage, consequences, conservatism, or conflict, but perhaps there may be some use in noting what this first-person narrative signed by Karl Rove indicates about these and other matters of interest and concern.

So, speaking impersonally about personal matters, I note for the record the mythic aspect of the early years. Karl Rove is far from the first hero who had a mythic birth, a confused parentage, and even a tragic background, particularly as it relates to his mother's suicide. His functional father was not his biological father, and the story has been dwelt on in the blogs in an attempt to associate Rove with homosexuality, a political spin that need not detain us. So much for the early years, somewhat tinted with rose. They would have provided a Freudian with a field day, a romancer with a gold mine, and a mythographer with a hedge fund. Our creative approach is paying off already!

OK, so let's check out the *Bildungsroman* aspect—you know, the education of the hustler as a young man. Now what happened was that Karl Rove became, at a young age, a political operative or hack, a spin artist, a consultant, an expert about the arcane manipulations of politics in the ward-heeler sense of the word. If you are interested in focus groups, polling, and the manipulation of issues and debates, there might be something of some slight interest for you in this book. But as for education—while there is experience—there is little to be found here. In Bill Clinton's autobiography, we learn that a college professor threw a copy of *The Republic* on the floor and pronounced to his class, "Plato is a fascist!" In Karl Rove's text, political thought began with Barry Goldwater and William F. Buckley, Jr., and *National Review* was a "weekly." Karl was a Westerner, Karl related to Texas, and Karl liked the Bushes. That was the education. Like the Clintons, Karl was a college politician, and like them, he never grew up. Unlike them, he was a College Republican, and unlike the Clintons, he never obtained his college degree. And it shows.

Turning from the mythic aspects, we look now to aspects of myth. Karl is self-conscious—he knows that he is a myth. His 34th and final chapter is entitled "Rove: the Myth." What is the Myth? The Myth of the enemy is that he is a little troll who looks as if he were drawn by Charles Addams; the myth of the narrative is that he is not. The Myth is that he is a weirdo and, what is worse, an unscrupulous liar and bullslinger who has done incalculable damage to the people who supported George W. Bush; the myth of the narrative is that It Just Ain't So. The Myth about his inhumanity is contraindicated by his second marriage and the son of that marriage; but the myth of the narrative omits entirely the recent DIVORCE NO. 2.

Therefore, much of the narrative is required to overcome the Myth with a myth.

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Question: What must you do, when they say you are a space alien in disguise? Answer: Refer frequently to your human (not alien) emotions, your human mistakes, your human love, and your human fears in the form of understandable bodily discomforts and human embarrassments, yet still omitting DIVORCE NO. 2. Examples: "I felt like vomiting"; vetting candidates is like "a proctology exam"; I "salivated" at the thought of using research about Al Gore, *etc.*, *etc.* Love of Abraham Lincoln and of rock music are other hallmarks of humanity. So is the loyalty to Bush, who was right about Iraq. But just here the mythology becomes so over the top as to lose all persuasiveness.

I have come to learn through bitter experience that Karl Rove's autobiography cannot, finally, be productively compared with Victorian fiction (though some paragraphs of Esther Summerson still come to mind). Superior analogues suggest themselves from horror movies of the 1950's: *Invaders From Mars* (Menzies, 1953), for example. The boy sees the flying saucer land behind the sand dune with the wordless chorus and then notices that his suddenly harsh father has a . . . thing . . . on the back of his neck. Or more obviously, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (Siegel, 1956): Pod People keep Kevin McCarthy from doing Dana Wynter, and everybody thinks he's crazy because the trucks are driven by College Republicans. If this is McCarthyism, count me in, and as for snatching the body of Dana Wynter in 1956, count me in again as well—even, or even especially, when she was bad. I don't see yet any analogy with *The Creature From the Black Lagoon*, but I'm working on it. The SEQUEL NO. 2—*The Creature Walks Among Us*—has got to be the answer.

Contributing editor James O. Tate is a professor of English literature at Dowling College on Long Island.

An Excerpt

On September 11, 2001, I was the first person to tell President George W. Bush that a plane had slammed into an office tower in New York City and was aboard Air Force One as it criss-crossed the country in the hours that followed. I was caught in the sweep of history, in a moment much larger than someone who came from where I did could have expected to be in. It was a turning point for a presidency and the country. The courage and conviction I saw among those aboard Air Force One and in the White House in the years ahead gave me the confidence of having been on the right side of the fight.

Politics is often considered a contact sport, and it is. But the focus on its play by play can obscure why politics is important in the first place: it provides an arena where Americans determine whose ideas will lead the country and how these will change people's lives. Leaders with conviction often shape the outcomes in that area.

Politics is high-pressure, high-stakes, and often frustrating. It's also flooded with moments of joy, excitement, and victory. One of those moments for me came on January 20, 2001—the day George W. Bush was sworn in as President of the United States. I had made my way to the White House with my wife, Darby, to see my new West Wing office. As I approached the building, I was momentarily taken aback when a Marine snapped to attention and opened a door for us. I hesitated for just a second. I thought, *Do we walk through that door?* And then, *When I do, I become a witness to history.*

—*from* Courage and Consequence: My Life as a Conservative in the Fight, *by Karl Rove*

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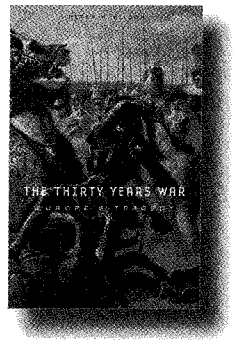

The Path to Modernity

by Srdja Trifkovic

The Thirty Years War: Europe's Tragedy
by Peter H. Wilson
Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press
1,040 pp., $35.00

THE HOBBESIAN MAYHEM that struck Europe in the first half of the 17th century was not an event, or a series of events, befitting the designation of a war. The plural form, as in *the Napoleonic Wars*, would be more apt. It was a pancontinental minus-sum-game involving all major players (save Russia) that continued, relentlessly, long after its early instigators and participants were dead. The conflict was not a Clausewitzian "continuation of politics by other means"; it was a substitution of politics by the torch and the sword.

Peter H. Wilson's detailed narrative shows the Thirty Years War as absurd, not only morally but technically. Rational players, he contends, could have wrapped it up well before Sweden joined the fray, yet the balance between ends and means in the decisionmaking calculus—tenuous to start with—was lost to fear, pride, blood lust, *va-banque* adventurism, fanaticism, and numbing inertia well before the war entered its most destructive phase in the 1630's. These sentiments are present in varying degrees in all wars. In Europe between 1618 and 1648, they were dominant.

After a striking opening that covers the Defenestration of Prague, Wilson takes the reader through 100 years and 266 pages of events—the Reformation, the emergence of confessional power politics, the complex late-16th-century European chessboard—that provide the backdrop to the main story. His ensuing account of who did what to whom, and why, is dryly authoritative (endnotes take 70 pages of small font) and likely to remain a definitive history of the war for decades to come. The book is not a joy to read, however. That the narrative is sometimes hard to follow is partly owing to the complexity of the material. When the author errs, it is on the side of excessive detail. The following passage illustrates the problem:

> Two-thirds of La Valette's army deserted as supply arrangements broke down. As it became obvious the Hessians would not cooperate, the cardinal retreated precipitously to Metz in September. Gronsfeld crossed with 6,500 Bavarian troops to join Gallas in pushing south from Saarbrücken into Lorraine. This struck clearly at French interests, but was intended to restore the situation there prior to the French invasion of 1632, not to attack France itself. Duke Charles had launched his third attempt that year to recover his duchy, striking across Alsace from Breisach at the end of June with the help of two Bavarian cavalry regiments. His second sister, Henriette of Pfalzburg, accompanied the troops in male attire and participated in the fighting.

The above is but one half of a single paragraph, and the bit about Henriette is neither a footnote nor in parentheses. There are too many names of people and places in Wilson's book, most of them making a single cameo appearance. (In history, as in design, less can be more.)

In the last two chapters, however, Wilson comes into his own as a world-class historian. His final 80 pages provide a bold but not flamboyant revisionist finale. Most importantly, he downplays the religious dimension of the conflict. Although religious tension contributed to the outbreak of the war, the link was far from straightforward:

> All Christian confessions sprang from common roots, but developed a momentum of their own due to vested material interests, social concerns for status and prestige, and the psychological need to belong and to define that belonging by distancing oneself from those holding different views.

Eastern Central Europeans, on the other hand, realized that confessional disputes impaired their ability to fight the Ottomans who represented a threat to all Christians. Among the upper crust the common veneration of classical forms helped raise the exchange of ideas above sectarianism, and even during the war Ferdinand chose Protestants as imperial poets laureate.

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Confessional rights, claims, and grievances, intertwined with constitutional disputes, were significant in the overall mix of motives and justifications for action, but they were not nearly significant enough, Wilson contends, to validate the old view that the period 1618-48 was an extension of the wars of religion of the previous century. During the Thirty Years War, France was an ally of Lutheran Sweden and Calvinist Holland against Catolicissima Spain and against the Catholic emperor, up to one third of whose soldiers were Protestants. Sweden fought her coreligionist Denmark, while Saxony, Brandenburg, and others changed sides during the conflict. Protestant Scots served in the French, Polish, and Imperial armies; many Scots and Irish Catholics fought for Sweden, Denmark, and Holland; and many men converted to the faith of their current employer. All of them ignored Pope Urban VIII, a cynical Barberini "compromised by his own opportunism" and jealous of the Habsburg power in Spain and the empire alike.

The Thirty Years War became infamous for its all-pervasive violence and unremitting destruction even before it was over. British readers, Wilson relates, were informed by such publications as Dr. Vincent's illustrated *Lamentations of Germany* (1638), showing murder, mutilation, and mayhem in graphic detail: "All parties in the subsequent British Civil Wars struggled to avoid their conflict descending into the depravity they believed afflicted Germany." A century and a half later, Schiller and other German Romantics, obsessed with death, destruction, and the loss of identity, merged the collective memory of plunder, mass murder, and plague with a sense of blameless German victimhood and of merciless foreign savagery, with the promise of eventual redemption through the rise of a new, stronger German nation from the ashes. It was a powerful and dangerous mix, with lasting significance for the Germans and for the rest of Europe.

As Wilson shows, however, the destruction was uneven across time and spaces, allowing some regions to recuperate as others were being ravaged. The lasting devastation caused by the Swedes along the Elbe, Rhine, and Main valleys, and by the Imperialists and their allies in the Protestant areas after Nördlingen, was unprecedented but, mercifully, not universal. The demographic and economic recovery was vigorous, though uneven. Wilson concludes that an accurate assessment of the war's human and material cost is impossible, but that a 15-20 percent population decline in the affected areas is more realistic than the old claim of 33 percent or more that had been long accepted as fact. Nonetheless, "Even a 15 percent decline would make the Thirty Years War the most destructive conflict in European history." By comparison, the Soviet Union, which suffered the heaviest casualties of World War II, lost less than 12 percent of its inhabitants, while, in Europe as a whole, 34 million dead accounted for no more than 6 percent of its pre-war population.

The scale of lethal violence perpetrated by soldiers against civilians is also questioned by Wilson. Beatings, plunder, and intimidation were common enough, but documented murder and rape were less widespread than has generally been believed. The Saxon town of Naumburg lost more than half of its 8,900 inhabitants between 1618 and 1645, yet only 18 were listed as killed by soldiers, despite the place having been sacked and plundered for a week by the Swedes in 1635. For soldier and civilian alike, disease combined with poor nourishment, displacement, and atrocious hygiene proved more potent than muskets, sword, and cannon. In the ranks, Wilson estimates, "three men died of disease for every one killed in action, suggesting that up to 1.8 million soldiers died during the war." It is very likely, he contends, that many of the people who died in the empire between 1618 and 1648 would have had their lives cut short by plague, typhus, and cholera even without the war, but troop movements, plunder, and dislocation clearly made things much worse.

Wilson's conclusions regarding the war's economic, social, political, administrative, cultural, and artistic impact are original, often striking. He traces the phenomenon of 17th-century inflation and explains that it would have hit Europe even without the mayhem. He disposes of the German and Czech nationalist myths, mutually hostile yet equally insistent that the conflict destroyed vibrant pre-war cultures and led to alien domination. *En passant*, Wilson demolishes the German claim, post-Versailles, that the loss of Pomerania to Sweden denied Germany an opportunity to become a colonial power until the 1880's and thus contributed to her sense of encirclement, which led to the tragedy of 1914.

The resilience of the municipal and provincial structures in the German-speaking lands was impressive. Though in acute crisis, Wilson says, territorial rule did not collapse, and administrators adapted under seemingly impossible conditions. The result was a process of managerial secular rationalization inherent in state development and the concurrent weakening of the power of princely and ecclesiastical elites. The war forced contemporaries to confront a question central to early modern life (the relative roles of God and people in shaping events), and the answers were detrimental to the attempts, after 1648, to re-establish the old order. Wilson is careful to stress that mid-17th-century European rulers were not conscious state-builders. Nevertheless, by providing a new charter for European relations, the Peace of Westphalia paved the way to absolutism, to the centralized monopoly of legitimate violence, to the secularization of politics and society, to the global system of sovereign states as primary international actors, and, thus, to modernization.

"Europe's tragedy," indeed.

Srdja Trifkovic is the author, most recently, of The Krajina Chronicle.

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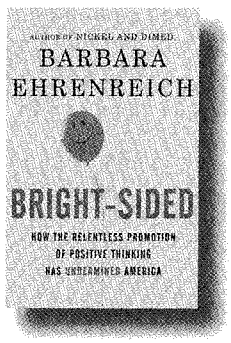

Sympathetic Magic

by Derek Turner

Bright-Sided: How the Relentless Promotion of Positive Thinking Has Undermined America
by Barbara Ehrenreich
New York: Metropolitan Books
256 pp., $23.00

Endorsements by Christopher Hitchens and Nora Ephron do not inspire confidence in *Bright-Sided*. Nor does Barbara Ehrenreich's website, with its list of soporific-sounding previous publications, which includes *Long March, Short Spring: The Student Uprising at Home and Abroad* and *Witches, Midwives, and Nurses: A History of Women Healers*. Her enumerated interests also threaten tedium—healthcare, peace, women's rights, and economic justice. But despite these contraindications, and despite the fact that the author fires wide of the most obvious target, *Bright-Sided* contrives to be both worthwhile and original.

America is regarded, and regards herself, as a "can-do" country where almost anything is achievable, and everyone can aspire to "the American dream." As Ehrenreich states, "In the well-worn stereotype, we are upbeat, cheerful, optimistic, and shallow, while foreigners are likely to be subtle, world-weary, and possibly decadent."

Like all stereotypes, this one contains a degree of truth. In all kinds of ways, from rapturous religiosity and utopian philosophies to cheerleading and effusive customer service, there are smiley-face stigmata across all of American life. Europeans do tend to be less demonstrative, less likely to have religious faith, less patriotic, and less likely to affect interest in the clients we secretly despise. For some of us at least, *enthusiasm* retains its older connotations.

The Founding Fathers were acutely conscious of history, and their republican idealism was tempered by cultural memories of the fate of Rome and of more recent European discontents. But as the 19th century galloped headlong toward the "American Century," social mobility, economic growth, and the sense of possibility offered by the frontier persuaded Americans that, if they worked hard enough, they could achieve virtually anything. Territorial acquisitions, waxing military might typified by Roosevelt's "Great White Fleet," and a rejection of dour Calvinism made many Americans believe in manifest destiny—and there seemed no obvious reason why America should not continue climbing the upward way.

From out of individualistic prosperity came new theories of psychology and personality, and "New Thought" cults like Transcendentalism and Christian Science, that insisted on self-esteem and offered opportunities for self-improvement. In parts of Europe there were comparable phenomena, but they were always counterbalanced by conservatism and the sheer fact of living in geographically and culturally constrained territories.

A belief became slowly predominant in American business, medicine, and religion (and politics, of which more later) that "optimism improves health, personal efficacy, confidence, and resilience."

There is a complementary superstition that negativity—which Mary Baker Eddy dubbed "malicious animal magnetism"—has a countervailing effect. One "New Age physicist" cited in the book believes that "the mind is actually shaping the very thing that is being perceived."

Ehrenreich also cites the charming recommendation given by a best-selling "self-help" screed, *Secrets of the Millionaire Mind*: "Identify a situation or a person who is a downer in your life. Remove yourself from that situation or association. If it's family, choose to be around them [*sic*] less."

Ehrenreich first developed an interest in positive thinking through the discovery that she had breast cancer. By this misfortune, she had fortuitously located "an ideological force in American culture that I had not been aware of before—one that encourages us to deny reality, submit cheerfully to misfortune, and blame only ourselves for our fate."

She was surprised, and offended, to keep coming across the same advice: Be positive. It was almost as if having the right attitude were as important as having the right medical treatment. As a woman of intelligence and taste (not to mention considerable medical knowledge), she felt profoundly insulted to be offered psychic pabulum—bromides, exhortations, and a "breast cancer teddy bear." "I didn't mind dying, but the idea that I should do so while clutching a teddy and with a sweet little

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smile on my face—no amount of philosophy had prepared me for that."

She shakes her head in sympathetic wonderment at sufferers like cyclist Lance Armstrong, who declared, "Cancer was the best thing that ever happened to me."

False cheerfulness in the face of illness is, the author feels, more beneficial for family members than for the sufferers, who must conceal their natural anger and fear and make the considerable effort of maintaining the requisite inanely cheerful façade. Positive thinking is hard work at the best of times, requiring continual self-evaluation and causing guilt when it fails to effect change (in these respects, a little like the Calvinism it rose to oppose). When their condition deteriorates, some cancer sufferers will blame themselves for having "a negative attitude." Far from being an aid to healing, for some patients it may be an effort too far at a time when they need all their resources and faculties.

Positive thinking has also been transmuted into the "prosperity gospel," preached by "pastorpreneurs" in megachurches empty of all discomfiting reminders of sin, sacrifice (most lack even crosses), or Hell. The author quotes a televangelist, Joyce Meyer: "I believe that more than any other thing, our attitude is what determines the kind of life we are going to have."

Economics has always been as much a delusional science as a dismal one. From the South Sea Bubble and "tulipomania" in the 18th century all the way to today's pyramid salesmen and bankers, there has always been a substantial minority of otherwise sensible people willing to suspend disbelief when presented with a sufficiently plausible get-rich-quick scheme. Thousands of charlatans cater to our avarice and naiveté, making millions by telling others that they can make millions by pinning up pictures of dollar bills and chanting repulsive mantras like the one Ehrenreich mentions: "I admire rich people! / I bless rich people! / I love rich people! / And I'm going to be one of those rich people too!"

As the author points out, this is little more than primitive "sympathetic magic," a species of fetishism that would not be out of place amongst Papuans. There is a strong conceptual connection between this private foolishness and the public foolishness that made supposedly shrewd economists believe, pre-2008, that the boom would never go "boom!"

Many large corporations have embraced positive thinking, realizing it encourages dedication to the creation of wealth, causing employees to think of themselves as sales representatives, even if they are not. In one nasty case recorded by the author, an employee was actually subjected to waterboarding *pour encourager les autres*. He was taken outside, ordered to lie on his back with his head pointing downhill, and held in place while the supervisor poured water into his nose and mouth. Afterward, the supervisor said, "You saw how hard Chad fought for air right there. I want you to go back inside and fight that hard to make sales!"

For middle-class employees, positive thinking has increasingly become "a substitute for former affluence and security," with counseling, motivation, and "team-building" exercises used to cover up modern corporations' lack of commitment to quality, customers, or communities.

Ehrenreich makes a promising start when she brings the discussion around to politics. She shows how the Pollyannaish neoconservative projects in Iraq and Afghanistan were caused by geopolitical ignorance and wishful thinking combined with sycophancy, and cites Condoleezza Rice's remark about George W. Bush: "[T]he President almost demanded optimism. He didn't like pessimism, handwringing or doubt."

When it came to Iraq, the "reality-based community" was (and is) sidelined. Brilliantly skewered—but then Ehrenreich's argument goes badly adrift. Although she acknowledges that positive thinking can raise its hideous head anywhere, "[e]ven on the liberal news site the *Huffington Post*," she makes the cardinal mistake of assuming that positive thinking is a right-of-center phenomenon: "The real conservatism of positive psychology lies in its attachment to the status quo, with all its inequalities and abuses of power."

In fact, positive thinking runs directly counter to genuine conservatism. From Plato to *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, from Baltasar Gracián (who sought the "dis-illusionment" of men) to Samuel Johnson ("most schemes of political improvement are laughable things") and Ronald Reagan ("Trust, but verify"), down to John Derbyshire's recently published *We're All Doomed*, genuine conservatives have always been profoundly pessimistic, solidly skeptical, and acutely aware of human limitations. In fact, they often err so far in this direction that their pessimism becomes a vice, producing an "uncertain trumpet" that few people are inspired to follow.

The real self-delusionists are Ehrenreich's ever-gullible allies on the political left, whose views are based on the most flagrant ignorance of human nature and rejection of reality. It is the left, not the right, that is responsible for egalitarianism, socialism, welfarism, "anti-sexism," tolerance of crime, mass immigration, multiculturalism, and so-called ethical foreign policies. Historically speaking, it is only in the last ten minutes or so that people on the right have moved into this barren territory.

This myopia on the part of its author turns what might otherwise have been a forensic classic like *Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds* or *The Revolt of the Masses* into something very much blander—the kind of quasiradical work that always attracts plaudits from the left. *Bright-Sided* is a partial analysis of a noteworthy phenomenon.

Derek Turner is the editor of The Quarterly Review.

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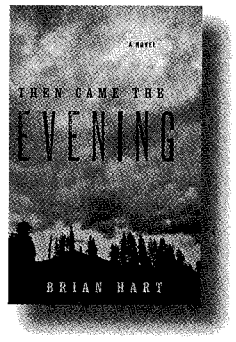

Falling Apart

by H.A. Scott Trask

Then Came the Evening
by Brian Hart
New York: Bloomsbury
272 pp., $25.00

NORTH-CENTRAL IDAHO is rugged canyon, mountain, and ranch country. Its dominant culture is that of the British and American borderlands. Its people are descendants of 19th-century pioneers and homesteaders (some of them Missouri Confederates who went west after the war). They are fiercely individualistic, but they also take care of one another. They know how to hunt, fish, fix things, and, should times get really bad, how to survive. (Think of Hank Williams, Jr.'s famous song of 1981.) These tough, resilient people are the subject of Brian Hart's first novel, *Then Came the Evening*.

Hart is a native son with a working-class background (carpentry, welding, fishing), and he doesn't much like what is happening to his beloved state. Despite Montana's reputation as "the last best place," it is her neighbor to the west that is the last of the Rocky Mountain States to be "discovered." Not by Lewis and Clark, of course, but by the rootless rich and the metronaturals (affluent outdoorsy urban vagabonds). As one of Hart's characters puts it, "we're being colonized." That concern runs throughout the novel. Hart's theme is the destruction of nature and community—all that is authentic and beautiful—by war, rootlessness, and money.

The setting of his tale is Lake Fork, Idaho, a small town just south of the gentrified summer-resort community of McCall, in the mountainous central part of the state. It begins in 1972 with the return of Bandy Dorner from combat in Vietnam. Not long afterward, a thoughtless crime sends him to the penitentiary. The story shifts to 1990, the year of the run-up to the Gulf War, with Bandy's second return home. His parents are dead, but his estranged wife, Iona, has returned to care for their 18-year-old son, Tracy, who fell while fixing up the house with the help of an elderly but very able neighbor, Wilhelm Guntley. Thus does the family uneasily and warily come together.

Bandy promptly finds that the local people are not the only things to have changed.

> They . . . passed a sign for another new golf course. There were townhouses and condos . . . and they struck Bandy as being somehow predatory. He still didn't understand where all these people came from. It was like they were refugees, people set upon by some unknown force who had saved nothing from their past lives but their bank accounts, or maybe it was their bank accounts that had driven them from their homes into the mountains. The wealthy were invading and it wasn't out of necessity.

A neologism that helps explain what Bandy and Wilhelm are feeling is *solastalgia*, defined by its inventor, Glenn Albrecht, as "the pain experienced when there is a recognition that the place where one resides and that one loves is under immediate assault." This time, those responsible for the violation are not clear-cutting loggers or open-pit miners. They are real-estate developers, which may be worse.

Tracy thinks the newcomers will bring construction work, and he toys with the idea of selling them part of the family land someday. Wilhelm warns him not to do it. All Tracy will get for his land is cash, and when that's gone he'll have nothing. A depression is coming. "Don't sell that land. It's worth more than money." Wilhelm scorns the theory that the influx of the rich provides employment and prosperity for the locals: "You don't need millionaires, or a million people to find a job, and they don't need five-thousand-square foot homes and golf courses. That ain't need."

Wilhelm calls it "excess." It is also evidence of a disproportion, or imbalance, in the economic life of the country. There's something wrong when some can afford two, three, or four large homes, each located in a different climate or region, while many more have nothing, and the others are left catering to the luxury of the super-rich. Iona is being paid to watch 12 sprawling vacation homes while their owners are away, either working elsewhere or residing at another of their numerous residences. Summer is short in the Northern Rockies, and when it gets cold, the rich

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fly away, only to return briefly in the winter for skiing, then away again to sunnier climes until July. Such transience dissolves community and turns land into a commodity.

Tracy soon witnesses giant earthmovers tearing up pastureland to make way for fairways and greens. Clouds of dust swirl, covering a lovely but forlorn Finnish church. He realizes that Wilhelm was right. There is something "unholy" about what is happening. "What's sacred if everything's for sale?" What's more, the situation is likely to worsen. "There were more coming, and there always would be. Until it all fell apart." Meanwhile, his father's life is falling apart.

This reviewer wanted to cry out, *What are golf courses doing in Idaho or Montana, anyway?* Hart mentions them so often he must see them as a symbol of all that is wrong with the monied invasion: excess, luxury, self-indulgence, selfish waste. It's not just that the snow and rain will keep them empty eight months out of the year; it's that golf doesn't belong there, any more than condos, vacation homes, or subdivisions do. The new development is turning the Rockies into an exclusive proprietary playground, diminishing them to a scenic backdrop to cocktails before a wall of glass.

HART, LIKE MOST NATIVES, is aware of the fragile and vulnerable beauty that surrounds his story, but he doesn't spend many words describing it, except here:

> The mountains above the lake were all granite, elephant-hide gray, and the evergreens spread thick and reaching away from the water's edge like ink seeping into coarse paper up the drainages until they faded and disappeared at the tree line, strangled by rock and thin air.

Rich outsiders have been known to say that the beauty of the mountains is wasted on the locals. The opposite is true. It is the rich who are despoiling what was the last refuge from the overcrowding, the gross materialism, and the general ugliness of a civilization in which nothing is sacred, nothing is real, and everything is for sale.

The novel ends with a hunting trip in the high mountain forest during the first snow of the fall. Tracy shoots his first elk. Wilhelm is there, along with two other boys. I see the meaning this way. When it all falls apart, as it surely will, the golf courses will go back to pasture, the ski runs to forest, and the rich will go away. But the natives (Scot and Scandinavian, Celt and Anglo-Saxon, Nez Percé) will stay and thrive, because, to paraphrase Robert Frost, they belong to the land. Idaho may have been discovered, but thanks to Hart, it's no longer unstoried.

H.A. Scott Trask spent some years working for the U.S. Forest Service in northern and north-central Idaho.

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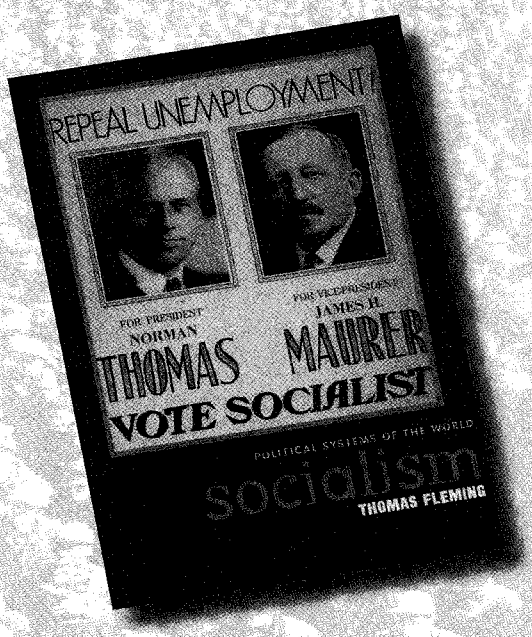

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The Happy Few

STENDHAL had the delightful habit of ending his books with the closing dedication, in English, "TO THE HAPPY FEW." The phrase is thought to be a borrowing from *Henry V* ("We few, we happy few, we band of brothers . . . ") or perhaps from Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield*, where the vicar anticipates his writings being read in the future by some "happy few." While the identity or nature of the persons in question is never suggested by the author, their select quality is obviously assumed. Are the happy few political liberals people of a particularly enlightened sort, or a band of especially gifted artists or intellectuals? There were many more than a few political liberals in Europe during Stendhal's lifetime, which makes this identification improbable. Perhaps he had in mind the historical equivalent of Albert Jay Nock's "remnant," but that idea seems too reactionary to have appealed to Stendhal. Far more likely, Mencken's "civilized minority" is the nearest equivalent. Indeed, it sounds just right. "To the happy few," for Stendhal, could have meant only the civilized few: Civilized people are happy people, and the most civilized people in the world are the happiest ones. Civilization means happiness, which is really the essence of civilization, which amounts to the condition of human fulfillment. Perhaps it is this fact that makes Stendhal's famous dedication so encouraging, and also so profoundly touching.

I am speaking here of happiness in the philosophical sense of the word, not happiness as postcivilization understands it, the inane one implied by Jeremiah Bullfrog and Smiley-face. Happiness for the modern world is a brutal thing: the bloated but temporary surfeit of the consumer, the momentary thrill experienced by the skydiver or bungee jumper, the jaded pleasure of the sexual profligate, the gloating greed of the financial executive taking his annual bonus worth millions of dollars, the vengeful triumph of the voter whose candidate has prevailed on election day over the ideological opposition, the drunken victory of the beer-sodden sports fan whose team has succeeded in beating all the opposing ones in the playoffs. Modern happiness is overwhelmingly and coarsely sensate, insubstantial, and fleeting. And it is ungrateful, and therefore incomplete. Its lack of gratitude is an expression of its discontent, which in turn is a sign of incomprehension produced by the inability to understand what happiness is, where it comes from, and what sustains it. There are connoisseurs of fine music, fine paintings, fine books, fine architecture, fine furniture, fine clothes, fine manners, fine cars, fine food, fine wine, and fine women. Similarly, there are connoisseurs of happiness, including, but by no means all-inclusive of, those previously mentioned. No one, in the absence of monthly publications edited for and pitched to happiness connoisseurs, can begin to estimate their number in the world.

Happiness, as the most sensitive among the rich learned long ago, cannot be purchased. Nor can it be taught, as a minority of the prestigiously minded young meritocrats who have succeeded in ramming their way into the Ivy League with the business end of an electrographic pencil are perhaps discovering. Most professors I know, with the exception of those whose terminal smugness and self-importance insulate them from reality, strike me as being quietly unhappy people. Indeed, modern education, from K-12 through the doctoral program, appears to be devoted to the pursuit, not of happiness, but of misery. Nor does it seem that the careers for which university graduates have been so expensively and painfully prepared are in any way a road to happiness, or even the discovery of the meaning of happiness. That is because they are only well-worn paths dutifully trod by uncivilized people (who believe they are ultracivilized) across a wasteland that regards itself as the greatest civilization history has ever produced.

Civilization, said Josef Pieper, is leisure. That is a profoundly classical idea, while the classics today are chiefly a means of academic one-upmanship for the kind of preparatory (actually predatory) student whose parents spend thousands of dollars on special tutoring during the school year and thousands more on summer college camps, or an excuse for pleasurable junkets to Mediterranean countries. And what is leisure but happiness itself, as the Greeks and all other civilized peoples have understood both terms. Today, leisure is simply another commodity, advertised and sold by hotel chains, cruise lines, the makers of casual clothing, and democratic politicians offering retirement on full pension at the age of 50. Leisure, as the postcivilized world knows it, is simply the act of doing nothing. In fact, it is the act of devoting one's time to what is not useful, and therefore to what is of the largest human significance. And it is one of the greatest of human paradoxes that what is the least useful in accomplishment is also the most difficult thing of all to accomplish. Mod-

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ern people are forever in search of what they call a challenge: starting a company, running for political office, winning a race, climbing the highest mountain, sailing solo around the world. There is nothing wrong with any of these pursuits, and yet so often they are undertaken out of a sense of restlessness, which comes from boredom, which is a result of not being happy. (It is said that boredom produces unhappiness; the opposite is equally true.) But while they may be blameless occupations, they are not the highest sort of enterprise, as one can tell by the empirically observable fact that they aggravate restlessness rather than subdue it. They inspire, not the informed gratitude of aware acceptance, but the ingratitude of refusal through lazy incomprehension. They are not, in short, civilized activities, and they do not lead to happiness. It is possible, if not likely, that only very simple people, and civilized ones, can ever know real happiness.

A civilized person is someone who, like Stendhal, knowing the world both overall and in relation to its elements, has learned how to discriminate in the finest degree among those elements and make the best of them his own, in the way that a great singer makes a piece of music his own, or a woman makes a man hers. Civilization is keen discrimination joined with the most exquisite harmony, which is also the definition of happiness in this world. Taken together they amount, one might say, to truth; certainly, they lead toward it. And those capable of such a thing are Shakespeare's, Goldsmith's, Stendhal's happy few. The question has been asked whether, at the time of the Second Coming, there will remain any believers upon this earth. The same can be asked of the happy few. (One likes to think that the two remnants will be one and the same people, but that, alas, would be a dubious assumption.)

On second thought, we may be absolutely certain that the happy few do not represent political liberals, nor people of any political conviction at all. If the author of the Declaration of Independence really did understand "the pursuit of happiness" to mean the pursuit of the sort of happiness that can be realized through politics, or that consists in self-immersion in the democratic political game, then he assuredly was not a member of Stendhal's band. Nothing is so corrosive of civilization and of individual human happiness than an obsession with politics, as our age of digital politics makes plain.

ONE MORNING RECENTLY, irritated by the number of unsolicited e-mail messages from various political activists deposited overnight in my computer, I highlighted one of these and typed in a brief reply: "Please remove me from your list." The furious response arrived within a quarter of an hour, to remind me that it is every American patriot's duty, in these terrible times, to amass as much political fodder as possible and that, anyhow, nobody needs Catholics in the fight against the coming tyranny. Everyone logged on to the internet is familiar with the type: the frenzied and bitter obsessive, angry with the world because it is in disagreement with his views and determined to deny himself all its countless delights, indeed happiness itself, unless such-and-such a man wins the next primary, his party (if he has one) prevails at the next election, and his personal political program is duly embodied in statute law. Such a person, who is more likely than not to harbor an almost murderous grudge against monks and every other type of religious, has in effect sworn an oath to himself to forsake the life around him and lock himself away in a neon-illuminated cell crammed with digital devices of every sort until or unless the world reshapes itself in conformance with the image he has formed for it. I can imagine no less civilized a person than this man, and certainly no more unhappy a one.

Half a century ago, the French writer Jacques Ellul wrote *The Political Illusion*, arguing that mass democratic politics absorbs all of social, and even individual, life in Western societies, all of whose values have in this way become political ones. The result is that politics in the classical sense has actually ceased to exist:

> [W]e are forced by our exaltation of politics to attribute great good sense to political conflicts and, proceeding in the reverse direction from what was always man's course in such matters, to jump from the expanded political sphere into metaphysics, from political history into metahistory that knows no miracle, no ends.

The only solution, Ellul believed, was "the restitution of man" through his deliberate self-removal from the modern political machine, his rejection of "big, general ideas" and "grand syntheses," his refusal of the primacy of political means toward political "solutions," and his rediscovery of human values. The internet, widely credited with facilitating grassroots political opposition to the national political Behemoth, by encouraging citizens to squander their energy and attention on politics rather supports and encourages the authoritarian monster, which thrives on political obsession—that enemy of civilization and, therefore, of human happiness and all human good.

Readers familiar with the work of Stendhal (Pierre-Henri Beyle), who worked in the administration of Napoleonic France and served as French consul to Trieste and Citavecchia, are aware that the man was hardly indifferent to politics, whether secular or religious. Yet he always kept his priorities straight, as *Walks in Rome* (nine-tenths art criticism and history, one-tenth, or less, politics and religion) makes plain. For this admirable insistence, the great man was rewarded with a life that was more happy than not—and always civilized.

TO THE HAPPY FEW

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Sex and Post-Christian Arithmetic

WHAT IS A SCHOOL? Today, we think of school as an institution or even as a building. But *school* comes from the Greek *skhole*, "leisure"—*i.e.*, clear your schedule of mundane tasks and make time to contemplate what matters. It only makes sense, then, that parents who send their children to school, and the teachers who teach them, should have some idea of what matters, and of how to impart that to students.

For some time in this country, we have lived with a distinction between two kinds of schools: public and private. For many, the difference amounts to public *versus* parochial, or secular *versus* Christian. If you don't want your child to be exposed to Darwin's theory of evolution or *Heather Has Two Mommies*, you are free to enroll your child in the Christian school of your choice—provided that you continue to finance *Heather* through your tax dollars.

Edward Gay, attorney at law, is challenging that distinction. He insists that, according to the federal courts, every school in America is secular. "The teachers are serving a secular purpose," he says.

Mr. Gay recently appeared on NBC's *Today* show, seated next to his client, Jarretta Hamilton, as she held her eight-month-old daughter, Sarah, for their interview. [Arithmetic alert!] Also present was her "husband of 16 months," Samuel Treftz.

Miss Jarretta taught fourth-grade at the Southland Christian School in St. Cloud, Florida. Her tenure ended when she met with school principal Jon Ennis to request six weeks of maternity leave. By her account, Mr. Ennis slumped back in his chair, minuends, subtrahends, and differences racing through his head.

"I'm just trying to do the math here—when were you married?" he asked, and she answered. He then said bluntly, "Did you conceive prior to marriage?" By her own account the flummoxed newlywed "was just being honest" when she blurted out that the child she was carrying was conceived three weeks before her nuptials.

"Imagine getting fired from your job for being intimate with your husband-to-be," said a ruminatively incredulous Ann Curry, framing the show segment.

Imagine! Imagine a Christian school that requires students to refrain from having sex and threatens them with expulsion if they are caught. Imagine a newly hired teacher being told (in writing) that she is expected to uphold the school's standards of Christian morality.

Well, you don't have to imagine, because that is the case at Christian schools all over the country.

After Miss Jarretta was notified of her termination, the school's teaching staff met and were informed of the reason for their colleague's future absence. Then school officials called the parents of each of her students and explained the situation.

This, says Attorney Gay, is a violation of her privacy, and we all know the Precedent to which that alludes. Gay is also suing under "federal gender discrimination laws." (What does it mean to be Woman if you can't . . . be intimate?)

Admittedly, in order to preserve this woman's dignity, the school could have left the reason for her firing in the teachers' lounge. Whatever their reasoning, they should've known that making such an announcement to parents would likely evoke sympathy for a teacher with a hitherto unblemished record.

And yet, the coverage of this sad story reveals a curious double standard when it comes to residual Christian morality. If premarital sex is shameful, why would this married mother agree to appear on national television in a segment called "Fired for Fornication"? On the other hand, if there is no shame in it, why are Attorney Gay, the Hamilton-Treftzs, Ann Curry, the *HuffPo*, the *New York Daily News, etc.*, outraged at Miss Jarretta's scarlet letter?

I mean, what's the use of a scarlet letter if everyone thinks the *A* stands for "excellent job"?

As if to underscore this contradiction, Curry rolled tape of local coverage of the story. In a tone fit for asking Tom Cruise about thetans and Venusians, the reporter demanded of Principal Ennis, "Do you stand behind the fact that you believe the teacher committed an immoral act?"

"Of her own confession" was his obviously premodern response.

Curry asked Miss Jarretta what she would say to people who believe that a Christian school can set its own rules for the teachers it employs. After an awkward pause, Mr. Treftz pointed out that his wife had not been asked to sign a "specific morality clause" that defined fornication as a sin. Miss Jarretta quickly added, "At least people would know what they were getting into. I didn't know . . . that this was the way they felt about premarital sex."

A Christian school, Gay insists, is not a church. "The courts have consistently ruled that a private school is just like any other employer." If the courts agree with Gay, then do the math. In each equation, subtract *Christian* from *Christian school* to determine what matters. ◆

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Walk Like an Egyptian

ABOUT THE TIME that we moved into our current house, my grandmother gave me a pot of Egyptian walking onions. Winter hardy to Zone 3, they are perfect for Rockford, where many plants that are perennial in my native Michigan struggle to make it through our harsher winters.

I'll admit that I struggle a bit myself, and not just with the winters but the summers. Growing up a mile or two inland from Lake Michigan, I never knew that other parts of the Midwest (or even of the state) didn't experience the moderating effects of the Big Lake. Even after 15 and more years, I have my doubts that I will ever become physically native to this place.

The onions, however, are a different story. Doubting their hardiness, I kept them in that same pot for five years. They grew and slowly multiplied until, last spring, they had become root-bound. I prepared a seven-foot row in the middle of one of our raised beds and planted most of them, though I kept a handful in the pot as insurance against a harsh winter.

I needn't have worried. The onions were the first green to appear in our yard this spring, and as I write in mid-June, it would take several pots to hold them all. They simply did what nature intended them to do: put down roots, absorb the nutrients of their newly native soil, and get about the business of creating the next generation.

Doing what nature intended is a bit harder for people, especially those once rooted in a different soil. The bonds of memory and affection call us back, convince us that life was better way down upon the Swanee River or in the more temperate climes of the Lower Peninsula. Thinking that putting down roots in new soil is somehow a betrayal of the people and the place from which we came, we close ourselves in and grow too slowly. Perhaps without even realizing it, we live as if we're strangers in a strange land. Five years pass, then ten, then fifteen, and our sights are still set on the old folks at home.

The onions will grow differently here in the dark, heavy clay soil of Northern Illinois than they did in the rich, sandy loam of West Michigan. A discriminating palate might even be able to discern a difference in flavor. But they will grow, because they can put down roots. Onions grow better in good soil than in poor soil, but they need soil of some type to keep them alive. Leave them in the pot long enough, and there will be no soil left.

EGYPTIAN WALKING ONIONS have a peculiar means of propagation. They don't divide under the ground, nor do they produce seeds, as most onions do. Instead, at the very tip of every stalk, three or four sets (little bulbs) grow. Until they mature, their only connection to the soil is through the parent plant. When they fall to the ground, or are planted by man, they make their first contact with the soil.

There are times, most often in the summer and winter, not to mention the spring and the fall, when the call of home can be almost overwhelming. We grab a few days here or there and go back to Michigan, to stay in the house where I was reared, to visit my soon-to-be 98-year-old grandmother on her farm (where my father recently moved her onions to just outside her front door), to walk on the beach and climb sand dunes and to eat the local delicacies of the summers of my youth.

And through it all our children, who love their grandparents and their great-grandmother, who enjoy the time we spend in Michigan, still ask, "When are we going home?" They have taken root in a different land, and lived there all their lives, and they are connected through the soil to other people, to different places, to their own summer memories and sights and sounds and smells and flavors.

To move them for more than a month or two, even back to the land of their father and mother, would be like pulling up an onion by the roots. Given time and sufficient care, the onion will likely thrive in its new soil, but it will never be quite the same as it would have been had it remained where it was planted.

NO ONE SEEMS TO KNOW how Egyptian walking onions got the exotic part of their name, but the *walking* comes from their habit of growth. As summer stretches into fall, the sets grow larger, and the stalks weaken. The top of the plant gradually bends until the sets reach the ground, where they send out their own roots, the stalk withers and dies, and a new generation begins. *Unless the grain of wheat . . .*

Left on their own, Egyptian walking onions will spread, moving outward from generation to generation, moving back to fill in the holes left by the death of their ancestors. Still, without the intervention of man, they will never move far. When man does move them, though, they simply bow to the demands of their nature. Giving no thought for the morrow, they put down roots once again. ◆

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How Aussies Lost Their Pride of Erin

by R.J. Stove

"Is there any point to which you would wish to draw my attention?"
"To the curious incident of the dog in the night-time."
"The dog did nothing in the night-time."
"That was the curious incident," remarked Sherlock Holmes.
—Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, "Silver Blaze"

SOME RECENT AUSTRALIAN cultural trends—massive Islamic immigration, for instance—are so obvious that even an economist can detect them. Others occur so stealthily that they attract no attention, until you suddenly look around and think, *Hey, whatever happened to such-and-such?*

Ireland's influence on Australia falls into the latter category. Once it was inescapable; now it has faded. Its very fading is a momentous incident, like the silence demonstrated by the nocturnal dog. No Australian 30 years ago would have predicted such a decline.

From the country's federation in 1901 until the 1970's, the Australian Labor Party abounded in Irish surnames: O'Malley, Scullin, Lyons, Chifley, Calwell, Walsh, Cahill, Murphy, O'Halloran, McKenna, Daly, Kane (sometimes Anglicized as Cain), Cavanagh, Burke, Hanlon, Hogan, Gair. Study any list of Australian Catholic bishops' surnames from this period, and you'll see the same thing: Moran, Kelly, Mannix, Lyons (again), Muldoon, Simonds, O'Collins, O'Brien, Sheehan, Cassidy, Clancy. An Aussie born before 1965 will remember how lavish St. Patrick's Day celebrations were in Sydney and Melbourne, not to mention other Australian cities. All of which might sound similar to the Irish experience in the United States.

But it shouldn't. Because, for one thing, Australia underwent nothing like the huge Irish influx that marked the United States after the Great Famine. Those Irish who came to Australia mostly came before the 1840's. By post-famine U.S. arrivals' standards, they were seldom too badly off. Unpleasant transportation logistics, yes. Coffin ships, no. Partly as a result, Irish political agitation in Australia remained pretty mild.

The one conspicuous exception to this generalization came with two national-service referenda that set Aussie against Aussie during World War I. Most Australian Protestants supported conscription. Most Australian Catholics (which effectively meant most Irish-Australian Catholics) opposed it. Firmest of the voices against conscription was Melbourne Archbishop Daniel Mannix, who called the hostilities "just a sordid trade war," and who led the anticonscription forces at both referenda (1916 and 1917). Each time, the anticonscriptionists won. Nevertheless, they won by margins narrow enough to ensure that ill feeling on the matter long outlived the actual referendum results.

We need not make too much of that, though. Yes, Anglo-Australians and Irish-Australians had their sectarian strife. Yes, they traded witless insults in the school playground and discreetly—or sometimes openly—discriminated against each other in the workforce. (This discrimination is analyzed in a fascinating 2009 book by Sydney journalist Cliff Baxter, *Reach for the Stars*.) But they were not beating each other up, let alone committing mass murder, Belfast-style. A general sanity prevailed.

Such sanity had several advantages, but chiefly this one: When the real thuggee overtook Northern Ireland in 1969, most Irish-Australians exhibited much greater caution than their American counterparts about getting involved with it. During the 1970's, Melbourne's Celtic Club had a reputation—whether justified or not—for being a Sinn Féin activists' haunt, and the police would periodically raid it. More frequent in Australia than such overt action was a certain indiscriminate sentimentality toward Irish Republicanism. This broke out in occasional foolish utterances, especially in 1979 when Lord Mountbatten was murdered ("Guess what we did in the holidays!" chirruped one Sydney undergraduate newspaper at the time) and regarding the Bobby-Sands-led hunger strikes two years afterward. What it never produced, in Australia, was anything as systematic, politically well connected, and cashed-up as the Noraid network in the United States.

TODAY THE IRISH heritage is but one Australian strand (and by no means the most prominent) among a dozen. The layman in the pew at the typical Australian Mass is likelier to have an Italian, Maltese, Lebanese, East Timorese, Chinese, or Filipino background than an Irish one. He feels no interest in those Hibernian icons—Eamon De Valera, Patrick Pearse, the Easter Rising—routinely invoked by Australian priests a few decades back.

Of course, many an Irish-Australian (femocrat Germaine Greer, for instance) can be found among militant ex-Catholics. We have our own "misery memoirs"—*Angela's Antipodean Ashes*, perhaps?—in which the more boringly bourgeois an author's childhood, the more lurid the tales of incestuous proletarian abuse with which he laughs all the way to the bank. So in some ways, Irish visitors to modern Australia would feel right at home.

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Except that in other ways, they wouldn't. Contrast the public response in Ireland concerning the Murphy and Ryan Reports with the public response in Australia concerning the government's rather similar "Forgotten Australians" announcement.

This latter event occurred last November. Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, the (since deposed) opposition leader Malcolm Turnbull, Families Minister Jenny Macklin, and everybody who was anybody, my dear, met in Canberra's Parliament House. There they apologized profusely to the half-million children—many of them postwar migrants—who, in government-run institutions, suffered abuse. Or were thought to have suffered abuse. Or knew someone thought to have suffered abuse. Or knew someone who did the cleaning for the third cousin of the next-door neighbor of someone thought to have suffered abuse.

Lots of tears were shed, pious Oprah-style resolutions made, pompous newspaper editorials published—but in taverns, barbershops, and taxis around the country, a different attitude prevailed. Thousands of Australians privately derided the brouhaha as the biggest joke since Little Nell's death.

As for the March 2010 feeding frenzy over Irish clerical abuse (and the concomitant calls for Pope Benedict XVI to resign), it is simply impossible to convey the scorn that the average Australian, whatever his own religious allegiance or lack thereof, feels for such hysteria. We who actually have a grasp, however slight, of modern cultural history find the spectacle before us (that of Catholics being lectured on moral issues by the spiritual descendants of Alfred Kinsey, Bertrand "Dirty Bertie" Russell, Margaret Sanger, and Marie Stopes) to be pure comedy gold—fully comparable with *I Love Lucy*, *Carry On, Jeeves*, the 1937 Soviet constitution, and Princess Diana's funeral.

In other words, when confronted with politics as psychotherapeutic debauch, Australians—including Irish-Australians—have retained some healthy skepticism. Too many Irish in Ireland give outsiders the impression of having lost this skepticism. Perhaps we should blame globalist sermons from Bono and from ex-President Mary Robinson, sermons which we Aussies have for the most part been miraculously spared.

Maybe some Irish-Australians should move to Dublin and teach Irish elites how to be properly, cynically Irish again. The shades of James Joyce and Flann O'Brien surely demand no less.

R.J. Stove lives in Melbourne. His mother (née Leahy) was of Irish Protestant extraction.

A Capital Idea . . .

Since last spring the value of the stock market has increased 50 percent. Perhaps you had the good fortune to buy stocks a year ago and are considering selling them but wish to avoid a capital-gains tax.

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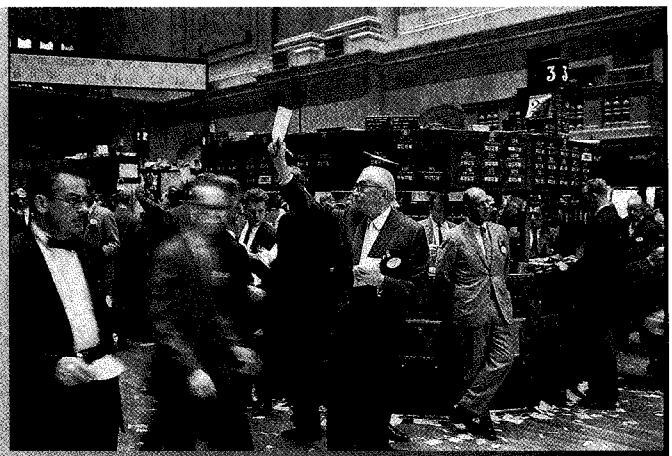

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Bear

by John Willson

WE WERE DRIVING BACK to Michigan after a conference on Herbert Hoover that I had organized for the Hoover Presidential Library in West Branch, Iowa, in 1984. After you get past Hammond and Gary, Indiana is flat but quite nice. Our beautiful Buick 225 Ultra blew the head gasket on the Indiana Toll Road near LaPorte. I walked about a mile to an exit we had just passed (pre-cellphone days, pre-OnStar) and called for assistance. Just about the time I got back to our car, which my wife had guarded, the most beautiful tow truck I have ever seen pulled up. It was lifted about two feet and had tires to kill for; it was flame red, with fire stripes in orange and blue and purple and yellow, all shined up and glowing in the late-afternoon sun.

One of the biggest men I have ever seen (at least 6'6" and 350 pounds) jumped down from the cab and said, "Call me Bear." He wore huge steel-toed work boots, OshKosh B'gosh bib overalls, and a red and black flannel shirt (it was summer). His beard covered most of his bib, and his black hair came down to where the suspenders crossed on his back. His voice filled the roadside and flattened the high grass. My wife's eyes were bigger than I have ever seen them.

He said, "You cain't drive that machine, so whar' do you want me to take you?" I told him we were about 200 miles from home, and he said, "Hell, that ain't much. I'll hook you up. Ma'am, would you sit by me in the cab?" As we pulled out on the highway he asked me if we were in a hurry: "I got this here surgeon back to New Jersey in seven hours—he said he would pay for the tickets. His wife and mother-in-law rode back there in the car, lookin' up all the way." No hurry, I said, but don't you have to call in to somebody, going this far and all? Big smile. "What the hell for? It's my truck."

Bear wanted to know what we did for a living. He'd never met a college perfesser with a stay-home wife before. Actually, Helen told him, she was only a part-time-stay-home at that point, because she was the cheerleader for our community (chamber of commerce) a few hours per week. He was quiet for a few minutes. "Is that one a' them helpin' things? Are you some kinda social worker or somethin'?" She explained that she was trying to make our community friendlier to business enterprise, and to convince our businessmen that they should put their effort and money into our old Victorian downtown and cooperate with our college to keep connected to our worthy past. He was quiet again for a few minutes. "Shit."

"Me and my woman don't need no neighbors," he said.

Helen asked him, "Then you're married, Bear?"

"Hell no, that would be like, you know, commitment. We just get along pretty good. And we got Noah." So the big Bear had a woman and a son.

"Why did you name him Noah?" my wife asked.

"Well, you never know when the rain is gonna come."

For 200 miles Bear talked about his philosophy of life. He owned the truck and his house, and owed nobody nothin'. He towed people around ("By the way, I want cash, nothin' bigger than a ten") and fished and hunted and did whatever little jobs came up. ("I always do what I say I'm gonna do.") He loved his woman—never gave her a name—but said she was free to go whenever she wanted to. If she left, Helen asked, what would he do? "Ain't thought about it," he said, and the gravel in his voice seemed about to break the windshield. He had never voted—"It only encourages them"—and had never paid taxes. He had no Social Security number—"I like to stay annanominous"—and thought the government existed only "to make us pee down our legs" with their rules. He talked about playing with Noah and keeping his truck shiny and in good running order. He liked Bob Seger but thought Springsteen was a fake. He drank Pabst Blue Ribbon, maybe the last guy I've known who did. I asked him if he knew how the highway got built, or all the roads for that matter, and if he had any worries about his living being off the existence of cars and roads. "I'll make a livin' someway," he said.

We got into town at dusk, and the bank was closed. Because we lived in a small town I could write a check for the $213 we owed him, a dollar per mile, and get it cashed, nothing bigger than a ten, at a downtown market. Bear told us he liked us: "Never met no nice educated folks before," was the last thing he said.

IT WAS LIKE meeting Natty Bumppo. James Fenimore Cooper put the American character in print when he wrote *The Pioneers* in 1823. Vergil gave us the Roman character in the *Aeneid*, and Cooper did the same for the one real literary contribution our country will ever make. Daniel Boone had died not long before Cooper created Natty Bumppo, and it's pretty clear that as many Americans knew about Boone as knew about George Washington or Benjamin Franklin. Natty was self-governing. He moved his cabin when there was no longer a sufficient supply of firewood near his door. He hunted when he needed meat and fished with a spear from a

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canoe. He could shoot the eye out of a turkey at 75 paces. "I never killed a man who didn't need killing; I never shot an animal except for meat." That was what the great Texas historian J. Evetts Haley said about Jeff Milton (*Jeff Milton: A Good Man With a Gun*), but it applies exactly to Natty.

He's unchurched, but noble, and unlettered:

> I'm a plain, unlarned man that has served both the king and his country, in his day, ag'in the French and savages, but never so much as looked into a book, or larnt a letter of scholarship, in my born days. I've never seen the use of such indoor work.

Natty has no family, only a friend or two to whom he is unfailingly loyal. His life is simple, but, like Bear's, it stands on the precipice of civilization.

Natty runs up against the game laws imposed by Marmaduke Temple, the civilizer who represents Cooper's own father, Judge William Cooper. ("Templeton" in the book is Cooperstown, still one of the most beautiful villages on this earth.) Judge Temple wants to bring order to the savage wilderness. Natty wants to live free. Behind their inevitable conflict lies the oldest dilemma of man: Is the beast in the forest, as Natty believes, or in the heart of us all? Judge Temple says to his daughter, as she is trying to keep Natty out of jail for having violated the game laws, "Try to remember, Elizabeth, that the laws alone remove us from the condition of the savages; that he has been criminal, and that his judge was thy father."

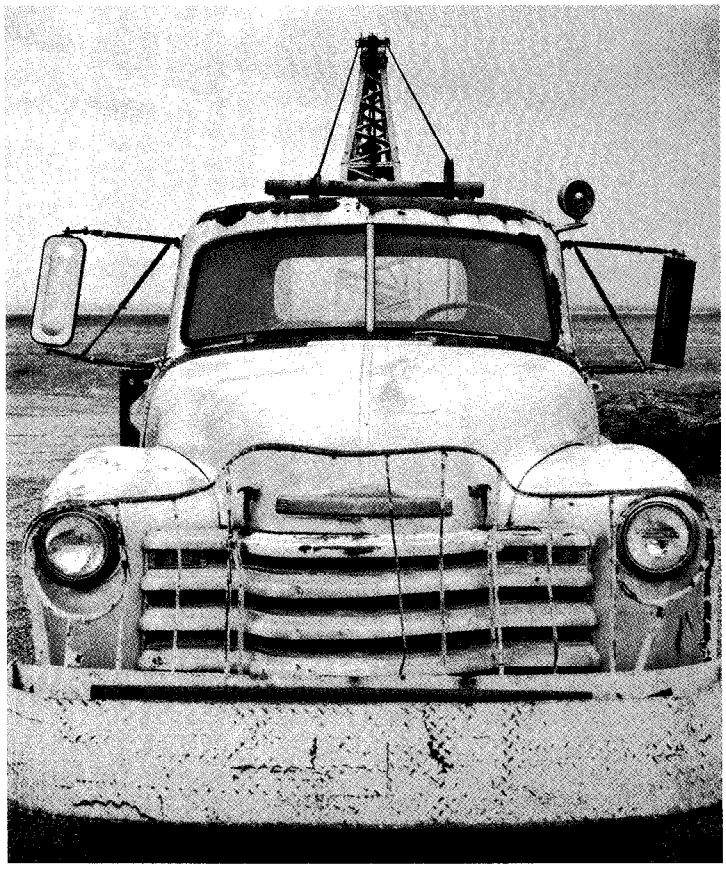
The complicating factor is that Natty had saved Elizabeth's life. She had wandered too far from the village, and a "painter" was about to rip her throat out when Natty killed it from 200 yards. "Talk to me not of law, Marmaduke Temple," Natty later tells him. "Did the beast of the forest mind your laws when it was thirsty and hungering after the blood of your own daughter?"

The free man in the wilderness, the great myth of American history, or the civilizer, the one who tames the savage beast that resides in the human heart? Judge Temple pays Natty's fine and thus releases him from the confinement that would have destroyed him. The Judge knows that Natty is noble and true but also says that he is unique among his kind. Most of us are like Boone Caudill, A.B. Guthrie's unforgettable hero/savage in *The Big Sky*. Most of us are like Caroline Gordon's pioneer in *Green Centuries*, or Madison Jones' wannabe Rousseau in *Forest of the Night*. Shane is a doomed hero in Jack Schaeffer's classic; few turn out like the Virginian or Louis L'Amour's Hondo.

The best western ever made, John Ford's *Stagecoach*, a desert *Moby-Dick*, has all the epic characters: John Wayne as the Ringo Kid, a noble Natty Bumppo who has only justice in his heart; a bad banker; a whore with a heart of gold; a sheriff who holds the law just enough off to see the nobility in Ringo; a fragile lady who turns out to be tough; a Southern gambler who gives his life for the lady; and a drunken doctor who rallies not only to save the lady in childbirth but to help the sheriff get Ringo and the whore off to a new life. "Well," he says (and I'm paraphrasing), "we've saved them from the blessings of civilization."

Twenty-five years and more later, I've wondered about Bear. Helen and I think he was probably the freest man we have ever met, completely without guile, ideology, or restrictions. He seemed really to believe that he made all the choices that needed to be made. On the other hand, he seemed to be an Edward Abbey kind of character, maybe from *The Brave Cowboy*, who was fated to be hit by an even bigger truck than the one he rode.

John Willson is professor emeritus of history at Hillsdale College.



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Retreat From Eden

YOU DO NOT NEED to be a reader of this column to surmise that the South of Italy is as close as one can get to Paradise without being a Nazi war criminal, in which case, needless to say, one resides in South America. We've got everything in Sicily, from medlars in springtime and tangerines in the deep of winter to roast goat at Easter and new wine in Christmastide. We have girls with eyes like black olives and the olives themselves, plump as pretty girls. *Da noi*, the sea, the sun, and the song are civilization's Bondi Beach.

But there is one thing for which the South of Italy is unsuitable, and that is being ill. Seeming ill, pretending to be unwell, malingering is all fine and dandy, and to the womenfolk around here hypochondria is what football is to the men, though I oughtn't confuse pharmacy promotions with national character. What keeps the healthcare system going is constipation, colds, allergies, insomnia, indigestion, rashes, vertigo, and every other kind of malady that pharmacists can allay with vast numbers of gaily packaged cures. Doctors fall in with the demand, prescribing these same cures, some of which are bought at the taxpayer's expense, and taking a cut of the local pharmacist's profits for every customer they send along. Vitamin complexes are extremely popular.

All this is charming and almost entirely victimless, like so much of southern Italian corruption, except for the one case in a million when a fellow has pneumonia and is prescribed vitamins—as though to make his nails grow faster after he's passed on—instead of antibiotics. Come to think of it, that doesn't happen either, because the doctors over here are good at recognizing the most common of serious ailments, the Top 20 on the Grim Reaper List, and administering suitable remedies. This keeps the profitable end of the operation safe from investigating magistrates' intrusions, as the sick recover and return to buy snake oil.

It is quite a different story when, perversely, some denizen of southern Italy decides to come down with a difficult or uncommon disease, say, No. 87—or, worse still, 1,087—on the Grim Reaper List. My advice is, don't try it. Don't even think of having an exotic cancer, or irregular heartbeat, or congenital syphilis like the famous German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. You want to be like Nietzsche? Go live in Basel. Don't mess around with the doctors in Palermo. You'll be six foot under before you can say superman, though I reckon the sheep's cheese pastries at your funeral banquet will be second to none.

With lands and climes it is as with people. Don't ask your cleverest friend to manage your estate; don't ask your handsomest friend to look after your wife. Similarly, keep in mind that it is foolish to order an espresso in London and dangerous to eat oysters in Moscow. And it is suicidal to fall ill in Palermo, which is the point I'm trying to make here in somewhat roundabout fashion.

Anyway, after about a month of steadily worsening back pain, I was taken to emergency one night, on a stretcher in an ambulance jumping up and down on the ancient cobbles, with a burly lad dressed like a fireman inside with me. The lad tried to stick something into a vein in my arm, but only halfheartedly, as though we both knew that this whole emergency business was a game, and had for some reason decided to see what it would be like to play it before dinner. On arrival to the local hospital, the lad and his fire-brigade associates carefully placed the stretcher over a pool of stagnant urine against the crumbling brick wall of a dimly lit corridor, asked me if I wanted a smoke before they went off, and went off. That was two months ago. I haven't smoked since.

Fortunately, at that point Alfredo turned up. Without further ado, he shouted to the first orderly who passed along the corridor whether he remembered Giovanni, who used to work there. "I'm his childhood friend," he added.

Thirty seconds later I was at the center of an interested group of nurses, wheeling me to cleaner and less malodorous enclaves. "What was Giovanni's job here, Alfredo?" I asked between moans.

"Oh, he never worked here," replied my friend. "But he used to pick up the payroll for a lot of important people."

Alfredo could work miracles, but medicine was not one of them. "Darling, I'm not famous enough for you to want to become a famous writer's widow," I said to my wife the next day. "You've got to get me to London." And that's where we were the following evening, as I wailed all the way from Heathrow in the cab heading for St. Mary's Hospital. Every moment closer to Aneurin Bevan's socialist paradise! But the diagnosis was swift, the nurses like clockwork, the bed linen crisp, and the food inedible—that is to say, identical to that in my old club in St. James's.

In a month's time I should be up on my feet. ◆

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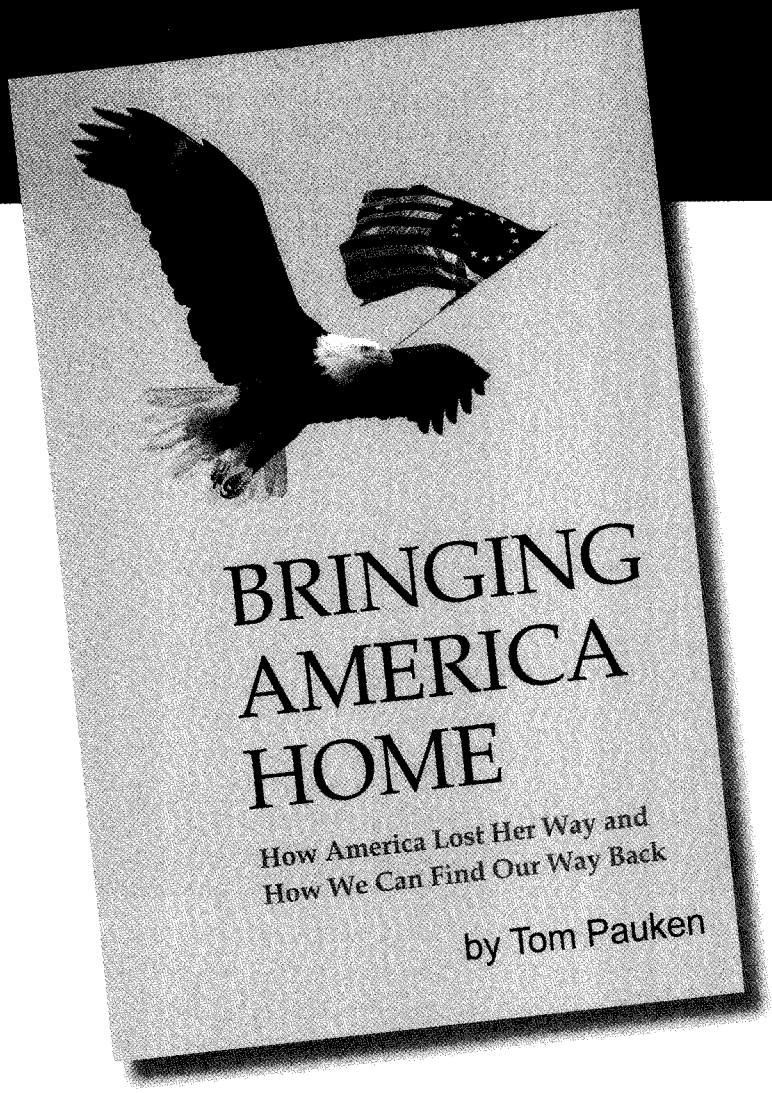

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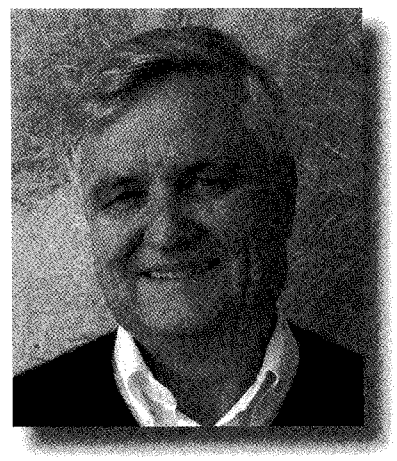
Tom Pauken, a U.S. military intelligence officer in Vietnam, served on President Ronald Reagan's White House staff. As director of the Action agency, he founded the Vietnam Veterans Leadership Program and implemented Nancy Reagan's "Just Say No to Drugs" campaign.

A native Texan, small-business owner, and former state chairman of the Texas Republican Party, Tom Pauken is the author of *The Thirty Years War: The Politics of the Sixties Generation*.



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Atomic Anniversary

by Allen Mendenhall

SIXTY-FIVE YEARS AGO, on August 6, the United States dropped the first offensive nuclear weapon in history. This bomb, code-named "Little Boy," killed around 140,000 people in Hiroshima, Japan. The U.S. military dropped the second and last nuclear weapon ever used in war, "Fat Man," three days later on nearby Nagasaki, killing approximately 39,000 people.

Whether these bombings were justified is a matter of dispute. As of 2005, only 57 percent of Americans approved of the attacks. Although a Democratic president (Harry Truman) authorized the bombings, more Republicans (87 percent) than Democrats (47 percent) support his decision.

Some believe that the use of atomic bombs on Japanese civilians was unnecessary, if not downright immoral. "If terrorism is the massacre of innocents to break the will of rulers," Pat Buchanan once asked, "were not Hiroshima and Nagasaki terrorism on a colossal scale?" Others contend that the bombings prevented further deaths (both Japanese and American), thwarted Soviet occupation, and unsettled Japanese nationalism, which was bound up with faith in the emperor's divinity. In the July 2009 issue of *Chronicles*, for instance, Roger D. McGrath argued that the bombings were justified because they immediately ended Japanese fighting, which would have persisted for months and possibly years. McGrath concluded that the bombs ultimately saved thousands of American and Japanese lives.

Perhaps so. One needn't look further than Guadalcanal and the like to see the disasters that a massive land invasion of Japan could have wrought. But McGrath's interpretation merely begs the question: What were the moral implications of the bombings—not just for the United States and Japan but for the world?

The bombings represent a human tragedy on many fronts. By virtue of the fact that 180,000 people died in August 1945, the bombings stand as two of the greatest catastrophes in the history of the world. Yes, the Japanese were conditioned to fight to the very last soul, even to commit *hara kiri* rather than surrender or shame their country and themselves. And yes, the Japanese government was largely to blame for insisting on a course of action that was certain to lead to the mass deaths of both soldiers and civilians. But were the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki necessary? I suppose one could argue that. For them to have been necessary, however, speaks poorly of humanity itself. Among the trillions of lifeless spheres in the universe, Earth teems with life, and yet its history is full of killing. Perhaps, in the end, some good came from the fact that the bombings deterred future nuclear warfare. The world has suffered the use of atomic bombs, and never should again. On this atomic anniversary, we ought to consider the moral implications of war. We also ought to consider how the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki continue to shape American policy toward Japan.

After the bombings, the United States, in the person of Gen. Douglas MacArthur, and the Japanese, in the person of Prime Minister Kijuro Shidehara, inserted Article 9 into the new Japanese constitution. The clause explicitly renounced the maintaining of Japanese military forces. Japan, it proclaimed, could not resort to war to resolve foreign conflict. Japan's Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) repeatedly tried to eliminate Article 9—or, failing that, to reinterpret its language as banning offensive but not defensive weapons. The LDP's efforts failed, over and over.

U.S. troops have remained in Japan since World War II, although they now occupy peripheral territories such as Okinawa, which became part of Japan during her imperial ventures. Because Article 9 forbids most of the practices of a traditional military, the Japanese have watched the United States carry out activities that, if executed by the Japanese, would have violated the Japanese constitution. Nuclear-armed U.S. vessels docked in Japan during the Cold War, for instance, and not until former prime minister Yukio Hatoyama took office did the Japanese government reveal this secret. Previous prime ministers refused to release this information for fear of civil unrest. Paradoxically, the only country to have used nuclear weapons against its enemy was shipping nuclear weapons into the one-time enemy's borders.

Japan, perhaps more than any other nation, looks to history and tradition to explain and understand today's phenomena. Of course, Japan has been guilty of historical amnesia and, worse, revisionism. But most Japanese citizens maintain a respect for the past. Japan's 20th-century history was horrific, but the Japanese have learned from their mistakes and as a result have adopted a sober approach to international relations and a modest foreign policy. In a recent poll, Japan ranked second among nations in having a positive world influence.

Ashamed of their violent past, Japanese leaders since 1951—with the notable exception of proto-nationalist and historical-revisionist prime minister Shinzo Abe, whose tenure was short-lived (2006-07), in part because of his jingoism—have worked to reestablish Japan's credibility in the world and to promote and adhere to pacifist principles. The same cannot be said of the United States, which has used the successes of World War II as justifi-

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cation for one foreign invasion after another. As Japan has become a satellite of U.S. power, the U.S. military has, in various ways, colonized or occupied other countries (in South America, the Pacific, the Middle East) and has presumed the willingness of Japanese citizens to host foreign troops within the borders of their country.

Okinawans and their neighbors have demanded the withdrawal of U.S. military forces. The current dispute over Marine Corps Air Station Futenma has drawn international attention to U.S. exploits in Japan—including rape, sexual assault, and other crimes—and has cost Hatoyama his job.

With regard to Futenma, compromise with Japan is not a last resort for the Obama administration. Obama may be even more delighted by war than his predecessor. As John Feffer explains (at *TomDispatch.com*),

> Under an agreement the George W. Bush administration reached with the previous Japanese government, the US was already planning to move most of the Marines now at Futenma to the island of Guam. Nonetheless, the Obama administration is insisting, over the protests of Okinawans and the objections of Tokyo, on completing that agreement by building a new partial replacement base in a less heavily populated part of Okinawa.

For 50 years, the U.S. government has taken Japanese support for granted, while the Japanese government has bent over backward to please the United States, going so far as to lie to its own people about secret deals that violated the national constitution. The United States has treated Japan like a pet, condescending to her on nearly all matters international. Japan, however, is one of the most powerful nations in the world, and one of the few whose retaliations against the United States, economic or otherwise, would have devastating consequences for Americans.

Faced with the choice of appeasing her Asian neighbors or ignoring them in favor of the United States, Japan has opted for the former—in particular, for mending relations with China. The United States, having overextended herself in the Middle East and offended the majority of the world, has lost credibility in Asia. The Japanese do not wish to be associated with her—not anymore. And who can blame them? When American politicians on both the left and the right believe that colonialism is still a viable policy, when they invade sovereign countries, when they couch their rhetoric in terms of crusading ideological zeal, the world watches, listens, and turns its back.

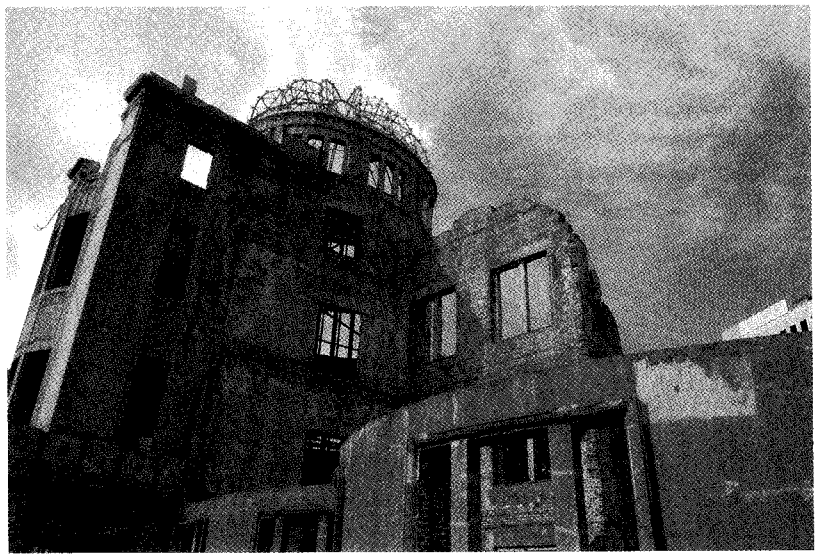
For 50 years, Japan has stood with us, and U.S. leaders have taken advantage of this deference. But as a small group of disgruntled "conservatives" in Japan demands an amendment to Article 9 to allow for armament and militarization of their country, Washington should bear in mind one word: blowback. A time will come when the United States is no longer on top, when the now-passive Japan grows tired of serving a foreign nation. We have already seen the effects of blowback in the Middle East. We have yet to see how far-reaching these effects can be when our allies and not just our enemies have had enough.

Americans still look to World War II to justify their military presence in Japan. Instead, we must own up to the present. We must work with Japan, listen to Japanese interests, and learn from Japan's vexed past. If Japan wants to elect left-wing DPJ leaders who will burden the Japanese economy, weaken Japanese industry, and embarrass the Japanese government, so be it. We should not use the occasion to deepen our involvement in a region that we don't, and don't care to, understand.

Imperial Japan, which lasted from roughly 1868 to 1945, is not a model to mimic but one to avoid. It brought about war, invasion, mass death, torture, rape, and occupation. The Empire of Japan fell long before my generation. And I'm afraid my generation has forgotten the evils of empire and has embraced imperialism as the American way.

On this atomic anniversary, it's not enough to remember those who died in Japan, or in the Pacific, or during World War II. We must honor them by learning from their mistakes.

Allen Mendenhall, an LL.M. candidate in transnational law at the Temple University Beasley School of Law, has lived, studied, and taught in Japan.



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That Election

by Christopher Sandford

THE CABINET OFFICE in London's Whitehall is not generally a hotbed of tourist activity. The building's squat, granite façade is screened from public view by a somehow incongruously lush row of elm trees, and, within, it's a warren of nondescript, government-furnished cubicles typically inhabited by middle-aged men in suits writing memos to one another. For a few heady days in mid-May, however, this normally tranquil, even bucolic spot seethed with media and civilian frenzy. There was a permanent crowd of 300 to 400 at the door, flashbulbs lit up the overcast sky, and TV reporters with cameras in tow perched precariously on stepladders for a better view of the action. It was as if the place had somehow gone to bed in a Constable painting and woken up in one by Bosch. The cause of all the fuss was the protracted saga of the United Kingdom's general election, whose ultimate outcome was being debated by "crack teams" (we were told) representing the three main parties, meeting inside. You could barely read of any other news that week. It was a real, all-hands-on-deck, headless-chicken disaster for the British press. The election, the *Daily Mail* announced on its front page, was an "unholy mess"; the electorate, having defied the *Mail*'s many clear warnings, was guilty of "a vote for uncertainty and shabby deals," and before long the United Kingdom "will be plunged into a banana republic-like abyss."

Perhaps the first sign that something unusual might occur at the British polls came back in September 2007, barely two months into his prime ministership, when Gordon Brown did the unthinkable. He hired Saatchi & Saatchi, the advertising agency that for three decades had been synonymous with iconic Conservative Party propaganda. For the unelected Brown, it was a defining moment in his attempt to distance himself from the spin of the Tony Blair era and establish himself as a credible, if dowdy, leader: Saatchi's first task was to produce a poster with the line "Not flash, just Gordon."

The other particular novelty of this spring's events was the decision to hold a series of televised debates among the party leaders (long stigmatized as an "American gimmick" by the print media). The unforeseen result was the elevation of the Liberal Democrats' "Nick" Clegg into something approaching Winston Churchill status. A BBC opinion poll taken 24 hours after the first debate showed the telegenic Clegg at 42 percent, significantly ahead of both Brown and his Conservative challenger, David Cameron. With certain rare exceptions (the *Daily Mail* again), the media swooned over this hitherto obscure, left-of-center politician with his "bright-eyed and fresh appearance" (the *Times*) and "debonair style" (the *Guardian*). Precisely what Clegg stood for—apart from ever closer ties to the European Union—remained somewhat on the fuzzy side, but it was agreed overnight that he had become the man to beat. Clegg's most persuasive pitch, which he repeated throughout the campaign—"At least I'm not them"—tapped into a widespread sense of media boredom and annoyance with Brown, on the one hand, and a matching failure to be convinced by Cameron, on the other. The day after the first television debate, the *Independent* had 21 pages of pure politics, the *Guardian* 16, and the *Times* 15; so thrilling was Clegg's ascent that even the latest twist in the saga of Prince Harry's love life was relegated to the back pages.

Chief among Clegg's grand claims during the campaign was that he was Britain's "most honest" political leader. The Liberal Democrats, he insisted, would "clean up" politics. Again, the media by and large were happy to take him at his word, declaring Clegg and his party to have been "exonerated" (the *Times*) in the expense-fiddling scandal that hit Britain's parliament in 2009. It took Ed Howker, a journalist at the relatively low-circulation *Spectator* magazine, to reveal the contents of an internal LibDem document that suggested the party might not be as squeaky clean as first suggested. "In words that should make Mr Clegg blush," Howker wrote, "his MPs were told that there were 'grey areas' in the parliamentary rules, and 'lots of scope . . . so be imaginative [with expenses].'" Even then, the likes of the *Times*, the *Guardian*, the *Daily Express*, the *London Evening Standard*, and others remained convinced that Clegg was "the new man from the outside, with his new way of doing things . . . No deals, no waffling, no dishonesty," as Simon Carr coyly put it in the *Independent*. There may have been no greater media consensus celebrating the triumph of presentation over substance since the Nixon-Kennedy debates of 1960. All but unmentioned in the effusion were Clegg's views on such issues as immigration, defense, or the economy—let alone the fact that, alone among the party leaders, he cheerfully describes himself as an atheist. (What can Clegg do, one wonders, during the Anglican prayers that open each day's parliamentary proceedings—sit back and think of Brussels?)

Another curious feature of the British media coverage of the campaign was what it omitted. While there were frequent dire warnings of spending cuts to be made following the election, nowhere was the possibility raised that millions of ordinary taxpayers might quite welcome an audit of their nation's ruinous public expenditures. The case to be made for the reintroduction of capital punishment,

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on which opinion polls have consistently shown Parliament to be out of touch with the electorate, went unexplored. And one scanned the press and news media in vain for any real analysis of Britain's open-door immigration policy—at least until a 65-year-old grandmother named Gillian Duffy took matters into her own hands and confronted Gordon Brown on one of his rare walkabouts to meet what he calls "the masses." Their actual exchange about "eastern Europeans [who] come over here to take our jobs" was relatively innocuous. What raised the encounter into an international benchmark of on-the-stump humiliation was Brown's subsequent failure to turn off his lapel microphone—and the glaring discrepancy between his public and private face as his snarled remarks about "that bigoted woman" were broadcast to the world. That there was a discrepancy was hardly a scandal in itself, but the impression of a man panicked by the mildest kind of contradiction, and looking immediately for someone to blame, was too close a fit to criticisms of his psychology to be anything but devastating. From that moment, only the endearingly brazenly pro-Labour *Daily Mirror* even bothered to keep up the fight. It was now clearly going to be a beauty contest between Clegg and Cameron. A few days later, as Labour exhaustedly tried to re-energize its campaign, "Lord" Peter Mandelson found his speech interrupted by the comedy sound effect of a nearby car crash, provoked, it later turned out, by the fact that the occupants of one of the vehicles had been shouting abuse at the politicians. The headline writers had no trouble coming up with the apt metaphorical match for the shambolic state of Labour's campaign.

That Brown turned up at all for the third and final televised debate showed a kind of heroism. There was some talk about a "fairer" and "kinder" economy, and a bizarrely rhapsodic tribute to health workers that reached its Hallmark-card climax in the phrase, "We have been in the presence of angels dressed in nurses' uniforms." Surreal as this was, it had nothing on the BBC's post-debate analysis. The corporation (funded, it will be recalled, by an annual tax on television-set owners) opted for excess all round, with a huge, pink-lit set, like something out of Stanley Kubrick's *2001* on a galactic budget. A variety of retired professional sportsmen and dimly familiar soap-opera stars were then paraded in to give their (predominantly pro-Clegg) views. Among the promised "state-of-the-art" graphics was a chart composed of three glasses filled up with differently colored liquids to show how the leaders were faring. (On these occasions I'm always struck by the fact that the Liberal Democrats are represented by quite such an evocative shade of yellow.) Only if Brown, Cameron, and Clegg had agreed to appear in bikinis and answer questions about how they would help humanity if elected Miss World would it have been possible to get a more perfect picture of the modern British political process at work.

ROCK BOTTOM, however, was reached by the main television channels only on the long night of Thursday, May 6, the election itself. On the ITV—or "independent"—news, a haggard presenter named Alaister Stewart enlightened the public at 1:30 A.M. that "The next result is in ten minutes—so time for a drink." This was an admirably candid approach for a man who was recently convicted of driving under the influence after ramming his car into a telegraph pole. But even Stewart appeared to possess almost Reithian gravitas compared to the scene on the BBC, which chose to broadcast coverage of "Britain's most historic election in 65 years" from the deck of a party boat on the river Thames. More than 100 guests were invited to help themselves to a floating buffet of smoked salmon and champagne, and periodically to inform the presenter, former *Sunday Times* editor Andrew Neil, what they thought of it all. "I've got Joan Collins!" Neil exclaimed at one point. "I don't know what's happening," Collins said cheerfully, gazing out from under a lopsided wig. On being told the Conservatives were doing well, the 77-year-old actress cried, "Huzzah for Cameron!" and punched the air with an incongruous Black Power salute. Perhaps mercifully, power was lost shortly afterward, and Neil was unceremoniously cut off in mid-flow. The network was left hurriedly to "return to the studio," where a flustered-looking presenter confirmed that Britain's flagship news broadcaster was indeed suffering "technical problems."

Not untypical was the reaction of a viewer who wrote in the *Daily Telegraph*, "This offering was truly dreadful. Noisy chattering classes, spin doctors, actresses—all ready to say their piece. Thank goodness for the power cut." Another said, "I have absolutely no interest in hearing the

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views of drunken celebs. Typical BBC self-indulgence." The corporation refused to disclose how much of its taxpayers' money it had spent on the event, making the somewhat arcane argument that because it broadcast from the party, its expenditure counted as a "programming cost" rather than "hospitality." When I walked down to the pier the following Saturday morning and asked the man in the booking office how much the same boat would cost me to hire, he replied affably, "About twenty grand [$30,000] for the night," and speculated that catering costs for 100 people would add "about as much again."

Meanwhile, much of the print media was engaged in its familiar pincer movement to remind us that it is they, and not the electorate, who are the real opinion-formers in these matters. Having first built up Clegg with ludicrous hyperbole and an occasional whiff of self-righteousness, the *Times* and the *Guardian* respectively now referred to him as a "bubble posing as a politician of substance" and a "vast disappointment." The *Times*, admittedly, was anxious, speaking of the "urgent need" to form a government in the interests of stability, but the Conservative-leaning *Telegraph* refused to flap, declaring the whole occasion "a great opportunity" for democracy. The inimitable *Sun* went so far as to forgo its traditional full-page photograph of a topless woman in order to bring us a "Whitehall Property Scandal Special" in which it lamented, at some length, the continuing presence in No. 10 Downing Street of a "59-year-old man named Gordon Brown who refuses to leave his public-funded housing."

When I fly back to the United States from Britain and first turn on the television, I'm normally conscious of having somehow passed through the looking glass from a sane world into a mad one. This time around, I felt the opposite. After the events of May, it was almost a pleasure to sit through the impeccably somber, humor-free mainstream network news, with its dire litany of catastrophic economic forecasts, looming environmental disasters, and end-of-the-world health scares. Home at last.

Christopher Sandford is a Seattle-based journalist and author who was reared in Britain.

The Long View

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Driving Home Their Point

by R. Cort Kirkwood

A RECENT STORY in the *Press-Enterprise* of Riverside, California, gives the lie to the notion that illegal aliens are just here "to do the jobs Americans won't do" and are largely a law-abiding class of the downtrodden, shifting where they can for work.

In May, the newspaper reported that "activists" warn illegal-alien drivers about sobriety checkpoints so they won't be stopped. That, you see, would mean losing their automobiles, the penalty in some benighted localities for driving without a valid driver's license.

The newspaper opened with the classic anecdotal lede:

> Adrianna Castellon, 16, stood on the sidewalk of a busy Moreno Valley street on a recent school night, yelling at cars rushing past.
>
> "Checkpoint! Checkpoint ahead!" she screamed. "Turn back while you can!"
>
> The high school student was among protesters hoping to help illegal immigrants whose vehicles were about to be impounded by police because they were driving without a license.

California, the paper reports, declared 2010 "the 'year of the checkpoint' and plans a record $8 million in checkpoint grants, up from $5 million in 2009." Unsurprisingly, "Latinos" rushed into action faster than Speedy Gonzalez, and not just because an illegal without a license can lose his car for a month.

They allege that police are "profiling" because they set up the checkpoints in mostly "Hispanic" communities. Figures reported in the paper on the number and location of checkpoints prove it:

> A review of Riverside County Sheriff's Department figures shows that in 2009 Inland police in cities with larger percentages of Hispanic residents hosted more checkpoints.
>
> For example, Temecula, a city of about 105,000 that's 22 percent Hispanic, had five. Riverside, which has 304,000 residents and a 48 percent Hispanic population, did 10. San Bernardino, a 205,000-person city with a 57 percent Hispanic community, had 14. Perris, a city of about 55,000 that's 70 percent Hispanic, had 13. Moreno Valley, where 53 percent of the city's 189,000 residents are Hispanic, held 20 checkpoints—more than any other city in Riverside County. . . .
>
> In 2009 sheriff's stations in western Riverside County logged 70 vehicle tows in Temecula, 702 in Perris and 1,540 in Moreno Valley, where police impounded the most vehicles. Most belonged to drivers with no license or a suspended license.
>
> Most Moreno Valley checkpoints have been in the most heavily Hispanic of the city's five voting districts. According to agency records, from 2007 to 2009, police hosted a total of 36 checkpoints throughout three city districts where Hispanics are the largest ethnic group.
>
> During the same two-year period police held a total of five checkpoints throughout two districts that are less densely populated and cover the largest area, where whites are the largest racial group.

With that kind of fascism afoot, what's a poor *campesino* to do?

Of course, police denied profiling Mexicans and claimed they "chose the busiest streets and relied on the same four or five spots because they have large areas to park tow trucks and other vehicles," the *Press-Enterprise* reported. So they "began this year spreading checkpoints across the entire city." This hasty admission proved the "Latinos" were right.

The better response would have been to tell the "Latinos" the checkpoints will stand as long as necessary, given this telling statistic, also from the newspaper account: Drivers without licenses account for 40 percent of the nation's hit-and-run crashes. The paper didn't report that statistics show a strong correlation between the number of illegals in a state and the number of unlicensed drivers involved in hit-and-run fatalities. Profiling used to be called good police work.

As reports about illegals go, this one seems ho-hum compared with the usual horror story about an unlicensed Mexican career criminal, hurtling down the street in a Chevy Suburban and killing a child eating ice cream at Baskin-Robbins. Except for one thing: the shift in what Latino "activists" implicitly claim by warning illegals about the checkpoints. In the past, they said illegals needed licenses because they must get to work. Now, licenses don't matter—because illegals must get to work.

And the "Latinos"—Mexicans—don't care who gets killed. Their activism has gone beyond marching in the streets and shouting for open borders. Now it includes public obstruction of justice.

R. Cort Kirkwood is the author of Real Men: Ten Courageous Americans To Know and Admire.

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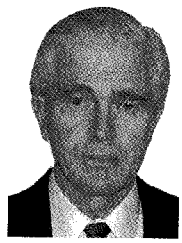
George McCartney

Breathless (*À bout de souffle*)
Produced by Les Productions Georges de Beauregard ♦
Written and directed by Jean-Luc Godard ♦
Distributed by Rialto Pictures



The Last Gasp

THIS PAST MAY, French director Jean-Luc Godard's first feature film, *Breathless* (*À bout de souffle*), was rereleased in a new print on its 50th anniversary. It was briefly screened in various American cities before its release on DVD. In New York it played at the Film Forum, a theater in lower Manhattan dedicated to screening revivals and independent films, where, as it happens, I first saw it in 1975. *Quelle nostalgie!*

In 1960, *Breathless* won a modest reception in Europe and the United States. By 1975, however, it had become so armored with critical and scholarly adulation that its place in the cinematic pantheon had become unshakable. It was hailed as the breakthrough movie of the second half of the 20th century, a latter-day *Citizen Kane*, a rewriting of the very grammar of film. Why had this happened? For two reasons, I believe. First, it became widely known that Godard had been an enthusiastically prolific, if factually unreliable, film critic before becoming a director. This surely endeared him to those who scribble about film, and they, of course, are in charge of shaping the public's cinematic understanding. Second, by the later 1960's Godard had brazenly committed himself to the right side of history, making films that celebrated first the Marxist-Leninist line and later revolutionary Maoism, productions whose sincerity was made evident by their narcoleptic didacticism. Ignoring the tedium, many film scribblers wrote whatever was necessary to ensure history's and Godard's approval. So by the time I took my seat at the Forum, I was fully convinced I was about to behold a revolution in film. Soon after the lights went down, however, doubts began to rise in my mind. What unreeled before my expectant eyes was a blanched, roughly connected series of events in which affectless, seemingly motiveless performers went through the motions of a poorly edited grade-B gangster film.

Afterward, I reflected that I must have missed something, that what I had taken to be the film's deficiencies were not Godard's shortcomings but somehow my own. Hadn't the best critics panted in adoration of *Breathless*? So I read more on Godard's film. I discovered that what I had thought deficiencies were really marks of genius. Did the film's scenes seem to stutter as though the projector's sprocket wheel had lost a few of its teeth? Well, of course. These apparent lacunae were deliberate, the result of the Godardian innovation called the jump cut. When he discovered his movie was too long, he expeditiously solved his problem by randomly slicing a few seconds or more from most of his individual shots, making the released movie seem as though it was suffering from a protracted case of visual hiccups. How interesting, I thought. Godard had succeeded in reducing the film's running time of well over two hours to 90 minutes—quite an achievement, even if the resulting hour and a half seemed more like three. More important, Godard had turned necessity into a stylistic opportunity. His sliced-and-diced film broke with traditional methods of montage and thereby called attention to its own artificiality. You see, the very best critics are uniformly agreed that true art cannot be achieved unless the artist calls attention to the medium in which he is working. It's essential that everyone recognize the, well, artifice of the artist's enterprise. René Magritte had provided the classic instance with his 1929 painting of a pipe entitled *The Treachery of Images*, under which he helpfully included the legend "*Ceci n'est pas une pipe*" ("This is not a pipe"). Very clever, very Gallic! And entertaining? Please. True artists such as Duchamp and Godard can't be bothered with pleasing their audiences. Do you suppose their works are mere commodities created for the amusement of the bourgeoisie? *Quelle horreur!*

But wait, what about the *noir*? Godard had opened his film with a dedication to Monogram Films, the American studio that specialized in cheap B-movies such as the popular Charlie Chan features and other detective stories often classified under the label French critics had coined: film *noir*. With an amoral protagonist, a police chase, and a treacherous heroine, *Breathless* certainly seems thematically *noir*, but its lighting hasn't the high-contrast chiaroscuro thought essential to the genre. Most of its scenes take place during the day under a uniform light-gray wash of overexposed film stock that makes Paris and its citizens seem as faded as figures in a photograph left too long in the sun. This again, I learned, reveals Godard's genius. Not having enough money to shoot with high-contrast film under klieg lights, he made do with available light and thus underscored one of the film's themes: Inhabitants of the anomie-infect-

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ed modern world lead aimless, uninflected lives in which everything fades indistinguishably into everything else. *Comment existentielle!*

Once schooled in the film's formal properties, I was ready to reconsider the story line. It opens with a young idiot named Michel (Jean-Paul Belmondo), who casually steals a car off a Marseilles street and speeds wildly away. Naturally, he attracts the motorcycle police, who give chase. When cornered, Michel shoots one of the cops with a gun he has found in the car. All this happens so quickly and so by-the-way that the killing seems gratuitous, almost inconsequential. Michel then returns to Paris, where he takes up with his sometime American girlfriend, Patricia Franchini (Jean Seberg), who doesn't seem much interested in him or his plans to relocate to Rome. This is a trifle odd, since she thinks she might be pregnant with his baby. But this is Paris, and they are young and unconcerned with mere bourgeois conventionalities. Then again, she might not be pregnant, and besides, there is another and more presentable beau in her picture, a reporter who just might get her a job at his paper, which would sure beat her current career hawking copies of the *New York Herald Tribune* in English up and down the Avenue des Champs-Élysées. (Note the telling commentary on American culture invading France. *Comment imperialiste!*) After a prolonged scene in Patricia's apartment, in which the two desultory lovers alternately bicker and theorize about love and art and may or may not make love—one can't quite tell with those existential jump cuts—Patricia suddenly consents to run away with Michel. Her decision seems either halfhearted or whimsical, but we can't tell, since Seberg has evidently been directed to keep her bland face as expressionless as possible. In any event, her stated intention is short-lived. She soon betrays Michel to the police, who come and shoot him as he makes a belated attempt to escape. *Comment fataliste, l'absurdité!* No wonder Jean-Paul Sartre endorsed this film.

The film's defenders left me unconvinced, however. There must be something else, I reasoned. Perhaps it was the bits of business Godard had inserted into the narrative. Michel's obsession with Humphrey Bogart, for instance. In an early scene, Michel stands outside a movie theater reverentially whispering "Bogie" to a poster of the actor. In a clear imitation of Bogart's signature tic, Michel rubs his bottom lip with his thumb, a studied gesture that recurs several times in the film, most dramatically as he dies in the street. So, I reasoned, the film must be about how people are shaped, even deformed, by popular culture. Interesting, perhaps, but since Michel never discusses Bogart in this otherwise extravagantly talky film, there is no way to know.

And then there is the film's endlessly discussed conclusion: Michel's enigmatic last words and Patricia's reaction to them. As he lies in the street, mortally wounded by a bullet a fascist cop shot cowardly into his back, he looks up at Patricia and, defying all known film convention, makes three faces: first, an open-mouthed grimace; then an unnaturally wide and tight smile; and, finally, a plaintive moue. Since Michel has made these faces earlier, we know they must mean something. Given Godard's slavish devotion to Marxist-Leninist-Maoist politics, perhaps the expressions betoken that life in the capitalist West reduces itself to a series of sickly hand-me-down performances foisted upon individuals by the institutional marketing arm of a mass commercial culture so unlike those healthy mass expressions arising spontaneously from folks living in, say, communist China.

The sickness of Western life seems confirmed by Michel's very last words: "Makes me want to puke."

Hearing this, Patricia asks, "What did he say?"

A policeman perversely replies, "He said you make him want to puke."

To which she responds with another question: "What's that mean, puke?" Although Michel pointedly does not blame her, she is nevertheless held accountable. Why? The answer is obvious: The poor girl is an uncomprehending puppet of capitalist America.

The screen then fills with an extreme close-up of Patricia's opaque face. She seems to look at us for a moment and then makes an abrupt about-face, as though she were trying to evade our accusing eyes, and the screen turns black.

This willfully enigmatic conclusion also has its theoretical justification among Godard's acolytes. One admirer called it an instance of "his always interesting misogyny," evidently a minor foible if you're on the right side of history. It's certainly not to be urged against Godard, just as polite critics do not bring up his early allegiance to revolutionary Maoism and its cult of violence.

Having viewed *Breathless* again to write this article, I can say that my original untutored impression of it was correct. The film is a tedious exercise in tendentious politics done in an arch-postmodern style. It is devoid of suspense, humor, and moral consequence. It is, on the other hand, unquestionably the work of a knowing man—knowing in that cheap way with which the self-regarding convince themselves of their superiority. Like so many cultural commissars before him, Godard, the great liberator of the common people, seems always to have been intent on preparing a place of privilege for himself in the coming new age. *C'est amusant!*

By the way, the film's title is a mistranslation. *À bout de souffle* doesn't mean "breathless" but, rather, the "end of breath" or, more colloquially, "the last gasp." It seems Godard's first film was his last gasp as a potentially genuine artist, taken just before he fully embraced a noxiously suffocating politics. ◆

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Taki Theodoracopulos

Bringing Down Brussels

As everyone knows, Greece became a member of the eurozone on the back of a lie. The colonels' regime had collapsed, Greek politicians were nervous, and that pseudo-French aristocrat Giscard promised entry to a country that is more Middle Eastern than European, but with olive oil. Entry meant no more tanks surrounding Parliament at midnight—rather a pity, actually, because they kept some semblance of law and order. So from 1980 onward, the Greeks began to spend other people's money, the chief spender being the present premier's father, known to us Greeks as Ali Babandreou.

Thirty years later the Greeks have managed to bring the European Union to the brink of collapse—again, not necessarily a bad thing, but looked upon by bureaucrooks in Brussels as the greatest disaster to befall Europe since the Black Plague. Recently, a rather dumb and pompous Euro MP remonstrated with me for expressing delight at the prospect. Pigs that feed in the trough would, wouldn't they?

The Greeks, however inadvertently, might bring down the whole shebang. That is the good news. The bad is that the rich-as-hell Germans and the garlic-smelling French are fighting as never before to keep the pseudodemocratic union going. The reason is simple: The Greeks are in hock to German and French banks to the tune of one trillion euros. The global elites who believe in Brussels and seek to reduce nations to "ethno-cultural enclaves in a new world order run by these same bloodless bureaucrats," as Pat Buchanan rightly put it, are as undemocratic as they come. In fact, they make the Greek colonels look like Thomas Jefferson by comparison. Countries that rejected certain E.U. treaties, such as Ireland, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Sweden, and even France, were told in no uncertain terms that they would have to vote again, and again if necessary, until the will of Brussels was met. If that's democracy, I'm Monica Lewinsky.

In my recent peregrinations around Europe it was obvious that the euro was never purely an economic construct. It was a political one. It was to ensure total control for the bureaucrats uniting 500 million people speaking 30 different languages under little ole Brussels. Well, they got close to pulling it off, the tiny tinpot dictators, but then the Hellenes screwed up.

If the Greeks had any brains, of course, which they don't (they are like people on welfare in Britain—too well off to get off), they would quit the European Union, default, restore the drachma, and watch every manufacturer in Europe and America rush to establish factories in Athens and its environs. Billions in tourism alone would enrich Greek coffers. But as I said, they are too weak and too dumb to do it. Like a mistress who has gotten used to her monthly stipend and is too lazy to go out and find new blood, the Greeks will now tighten their belts, blame Germany and America, and go to the beach until mid-September, when things will really get hot.

The great oracle of Delphi was typically ambivalent when I asked her whether the European Union would survive. She gave me three choices: The first was that the rich countries will prop up the poor ones by continuing to bail them out until . . . That's when her voice trailed away. The second was that the euro might be abandoned, and the rich northern countries who avoid the beach will set up their own currency. The third was that the PIGS—Portugal, Italy, Spain, and Greece—will get their act together through reforms and pay back their debt. The oracle laughed out loud as she pronounced this third choice, but by now she was quite stoned.

So there you have it, dear readers. A few farsighted men got together in Rome more than 50 years ago and decided to turn Europe into a free-trade zone in order to avoid war in the future. It was a good idea, but like many good ideas the principle of peaceful trade and cooperation was hijacked by fat, faceless men who believed they could achieve power not at the barrel of a gun but through stealth, lies, and doublespeak. They flooded Europe with African and Muslim immigrants who refused to integrate, sold out Christianity to Allah, and rejected any loyalty to the land and people whence they came. Now the chickens are coming home to roost, and I, for one, am delighted.

But I am not getting my hopes up yet. The faceless ones are vicious and sly. They have the bankers, the press, and most of the politicians on their side. The pro-E.U. propaganda has drowned out the few responsible traditionalists who believe in individual freedom and their nations. My only hope is my fellow Greeks. Perhaps I will lead a midnight coup myself—but when was the last time a yacht sailed into Piraeus and Athens surrendered? ◆

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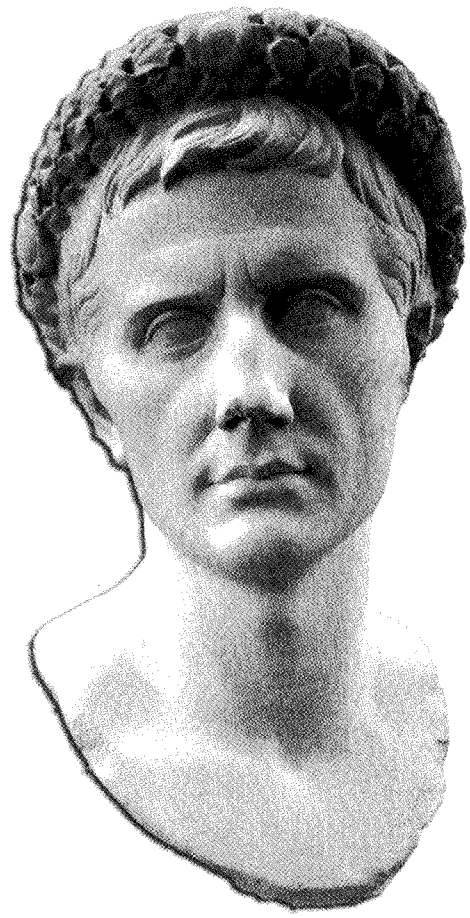

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